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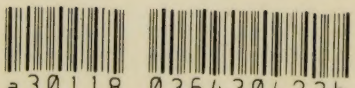

A Flame of Fire

A Flame of Fire

Being the History of the Adventures of Three Englishmen in Spain at the time of the Great Armada. Written by Rupert Hamstead, of Hamstead Manor, situated near Barnet, in the County of Hertford, and now first set before the public by

Joseph Hocking

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To
J. ROGERS PASCOE
My comrade in Spain
and
my very good friend always

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A FLAME OF FIRE

CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF THE CORNISHMAN

OUR country now, thank God, is in comparative peace again. The Great Armada, the very thought of which hung like a night pall upon our people for such a long time, has come, and—all that was left of it—returned to the shores from which it came. The proud boasts of Spain no longer trouble us. Not that they ever made us fear, for no sooner did her Gracious Majesty ascend the throne than the whole nation began to feel the throbbings of a new life. In truth, as my father hath often said to me, our people seemed to be new-born during the first ten years of Elizabeth's reign. It is true we had lost Calais under Mary, but we did not fear the French ; towards the Dutch we had only feelings of friendship, while we had tasted the quality of the Spaniards too often to fear them. That they were richer than we, we were well aware ; that they could put more soldiers in the field we also knew ; all the same, we had learned to laugh at their proud vauntings. We were told right often that the Pope excommunicated our Queen, and promised Spain and its King all manner of blessing—temporal and spiritual—if they would bend our necks, and bring us into submission ; while terrible threats were made if we did not throw off our allegiance to Elizabeth and yield to Papal authority. But, as I said, we did not fear. Freedom from Rome had made us strong, and God had so blessed the exploits of Drake, and Grenville, and Howard, and Hawkins, and Raleigh, besides a host of others, that, while we could not help realising the danger of the coming of the Spaniards, fear did not come into our

hearts. Moreover, when they came, they found us ready. From Plymouth Sound to the Isle of Wight, from the Isle of Wight to Calais, and from Calais to Scotland, we drove them, until God took up our work, and then the Great Armada, concerning which the world had talked so long, became so much driftwood, and the power of Spain was broken for ever.

But it was not of this I intended to write. For much as I love to think of these things, and although I have intimate knowledge of much that took place, I realise that my pen falls short of giving anything like a true description of scenes which stirred the pulses of all Europe and altered the history of the world. No; what I have to tell is concerning myself, for although my name is not worthy to be handed down to history, like the names of men I have mentioned, I have taken some little part in my country's weal, and I have encountered adventures which even now make my nerves tingle and my blood leap in my veins.

Whether I should have ever dared to record these things but for one fact I do not know: for, unlike my brother, I am but a poor scribe, and have but little skill in placing my thoughts upon paper. But lately I have been reading what my beloved father, Sir Richard Hamstead, wrote about his life during those dark days when Mary was Queen, and this has led me to recall things which have happened to me.* For stirring as were the times of his young manhood, dangerous as were the scenes through which he passed in fighting Señor Toledo, thwarting Stephen Gardiner, and winning my dear mother as his wife, I think I can say with due modesty that I have passed through scenes not one whit less terrible, and faced difficulties which even he would say were great enough for a hero like Admiral Drake or Sir Richard Grenville, to say nothing of a nearly beardless youth as I was in those days.

Not that I had seen no active service. I had fought in Ireland, and I had sailed around the world with the great admiral, during which time I had not only seen the ways of the Spaniards, but I had learned something of their tongue. I received a wound, too, and it was this same wound which, I suspect, altered the whole course of my life's history, and caused me to have those experiences which I presently propose to relate.

For, be it borne in mind, I realised early in my life that I must win my own fortune. My brother Dick, being the eldest son, was naturally heir to my father's estates at

* "Lest We Forget."

Hamstead Manor, while my grandfather, Lord Godfrey Bedford, had all along willed it that my sister Faith should inherit Barcroft Hall and its estates. That being so, I saw that while my father might be able to give me a farm or two, together with a sum of money, I must make my own fortune if I did not intend to live and die a poor man. Not that this troubled me. Dick had always been far more fitted for a squire than I, and I did not grudge him one acre of the lands. As for Faith, I rejoiced that my grandfather had chosen her to inherit his possessions. It is not given to women to go out into the world and fight their country's battles, neither surely did God intend them to bear hardships and dangers. Besides, I loved her so, that I would gladly have renounced Barcroft for her sake, even if my grandfather had left it to me. Like my father, I had the adventurous spirit, and I loved nothing more, or better, than to go out into the great world, and to take my share in the struggle to uphold our Queen and country.

Thus it came about that on my return from my adventures, of which it is my purpose to say nothing here, I fretted greatly. For although my wound healed quickly, my comrades had, during its healing, sailed to Virginia, and, as they did not expect to return for many months, I saw nothing before me but a period of enforced idleness in the quiet manor of Hamstead, which, although only fourteen miles from London town, three from the town of Barnet, and six from St. Albans, was but little to my taste. Especially did I feel this when my wound was fully healed and my health completely restored. Day followed day with monotonous weariness, until I felt I must go to London town and join one of the cruises which were constantly being taken by the young hot-bloods of the period. I did not do this, however, for something happened which, as I thought, promised fair sport. At first I feared there was but little in it; but in this, as will presently be seen, I was in the wrong.

Seeing that it was the coming of the man from Cornwall which begun the business, I may as well speak of his first appearance, and of what my father said at the time. When he rode up to the house first of all, I was lying under a tree, dreaming of the fine times my companions were having in the New World, and was naturally wishing myself with them.

"Craving your forgiveness," said the man, "but could you wake up long enough to tell me if this is Hamstead Manor, the house of Sir Richard Hamstead?"

"That depends, my man," I said, rising and walking slowly towards him.

"Depends on what?" asked the fellow, looking shrewdly at me.

"Oh, your reasons for wanting to know," I replied. For, as it must be remembered, there were so many Jesuit spies in those days that it behoved us to be for ever wary. Especially was this true when anything concerned my father. It is true few men underwent more danger than he in the time of Mary, and, as he has recorded in his memoirs, he snatched my dear mother from the stake on the day that Queen Mary died. Nevertheless, he never pronounced himself fully on the side of the Reformed Faith. My grandfather had loyally supported the ancient faith all through the changing times of Henry, the boy Edward, and Mary, and although he must, perforce, loyally welcome our beloved Queen Elizabeth, he never disowned the Roman Church. This was also true of my father. If ever a man had reason to be a Protestant, it was he. He owed his promotion in life to the influences of the new and liberal ideas, while he had for years been under the ban of death because he was suspected of renouncing the old. Moreover, my dear mother was a Protestant from her childhood, and held that the Pope was the Antichrist spoken of in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, my father, while adopting liberal views concerning the Protestants, always called himself a Papist; and while he never hindered my dear mother from teaching us according to her belief, my father was still regarded as one of the Catholic gentlemen who stood by the old faith. As a consequence, he had often been regarded with suspicion. Again and again had the Jesuits claimed his assistance, and urged upon him that his first duty was to the Church, and to his country afterwards. But my father would have none of this. He might not be logical, he said (and indeed from this standpoint he could not answer the Jesuits satisfactorily; for, as they maintained, if the Pope represents Christ, he must be obeyed before aught else), but nothing should induce him to be false to the land of his birth. The Pope might excommunicate him, but he would never plot against his Queen. All the same, he was constantly harassed, and thus we, his children, who would have nothing to do with either the Pope or his pretensions, were led to regard the visits of strangers with much suspicion.

"You want to know who I am, and from whence I came," said the stranger.

"You have hit the nail on the head," I replied.

He looked at me steadily for some moments; then he said, "And who are you, young master?"

The fellow had an honest face, and spoke, as I thought, with a true voice; so, wondering what he wanted, I said:

"I am Rupert Hamstead, my good fellow. If you are honest, I may help you to see Sir Richard, my father; but if you are not, I will give you a beating with your own horsewhip."

"God a' mercy, Master Rupert! talk not like that," said the man, with a great laugh, "for, if Sir Richard falls in with the plans of my master, it may be that you and I will be much together. Besides, Master Killigrew would not believe me if I told him that John Trenoweth allowed himself to be horsewhipped, even by the son of Sir Richard Hamstead."

"Master Killigrew!" I cried; "what—Master Tom Killigrew, of Falmouth?"

"Right the very first time," said John Trenoweth; "and all the way have I come from Cornwall, that I might take my master's letter to Sir Richard, and also, if he thinks well of it, to talk over the same with him. Not that I will not give you a chance to horsewhip me, if you will, Master Rupert; only, as your father can tell you, we Cornishmen have a rough way with us."

"Do you mean that I could not do it?" I cried, for I loved nothing better than a trial of strength, and, when it did not come to fighting with swords, the young blades of our time did not deem it beneath them to try their strength with those of a less degree.

"You will forgive me if I have my doubts," said the Cornishman, with a laugh, "and after I have seen Sir Richard, I will e'en meet you in a quiet place, where I will first give you the chance to take the whip from me, and afterwards we will try which is the better man."

"You mean some of your Cornish wrestling?" I said.

"That's as you please, Master Rupert. I be noan particular. But I may not wait now. I have travelled fast from Falmouth—so fast that, much as I desired, I did not turn aside to visit London town, because, as my master said to me, 'Do not kill your horse, John, but at the same time let no grass grow under his feet, for Sir Richard ought to know without delay what is in my mind. Young Mawgan is ready, and if so be that Master Rupert is of the same mind, and if his father is willing, no time should be wasted."

"What mean you?" I asked. "Do you mean to say that you know your master's plans?"

"Concerning that I shall tell Sir Richard," replied John Trenoweth, "so lead me to him without delay."

I must confess that I was not pleased with the way the fellow spoke, but his words so much stirred my curiosity that I forgot my anger, and without more ado led the way to the house, and a few minutes after John Trenoweth was closeted with my father.

"What doth the fellow mean?" I asked myself as I took some of the tobacco I had brought home with me, and, having placed some in a pipe, began to smoke. "John Trenoweth seems somewhat of a mystery. He speaks not as an ordinary servant, neither is he a gentleman. It appears he hath the confidence of Master Tom Killigrew, who, as all the world knows, is faithful to Queen and country, and it would seem that there is some plan afoot in which I may have something to say. If so, God bless the coming of John Trenoweth! for I am right weary of idling around Hamstead Manor."

I had not been long thinking of such things when I heard my father's voice.

"Hulloa, Rupert! Come here, lad. Here's something stirring."

I made my way with all quickness to the room in which John Trenoweth had gone, and saw that my father looked much excited, while John Trenoweth sat near, his face calm and placid, although his eyes gleamed with interest. There was a marked contrast in the two men. My father was tall, and of commanding stature. On his face were evidences of the fact that he had taken part in the weighty matters of our land, that he knew the secrets of important and far-reaching movements. He also had the appearance of a soldier, and while he had a seat in the English Parliament, and was much looked up to as a friend and tried councillor, he had lost none of the youthful fire of which he wrote in his memoirs. Altogether, my father, Sir Richard Hamstead, was at this time a man of whom any son might be proud, and I had always looked upon him as my model of what an English gentleman should be. John Trenoweth was entirely different. He was by no means a tall man—rather he was under than above the ordinary stature—but he had enormous breadth of shoulders and depth of chest. I had not noticed this so particularly when I saw him first; but now, being divested of his riding attire, I felt less certain of being able to horsewhip him. It is true I stood at least six inches taller, for I could give my father an inch in the matter of height, while I prided myself upon my prowess. Nevertheless, as I saw his tremendous thews, and

noted the depth of his great broad chest, I knew that John Trenoweth was a man of extraordinary strength. Moreover, he seemed less of a serving man as he stood there; rather he might have good blood in his veins, and claim some sort of equality with those who bore well-known names.

"Here, Rupert," said my father. "Master Trenoweth tells me that you have already met, and so I need not make you known to each other. But read this," and he placed a letter in my hand.

This is what I read—

"ARWENACK, NEAR FALMOUTH,
"CORNWALL.

"Written on the first day of September, in the year of our Lord 1587, *and the twenty-ninth year of the reign of our most beloved Lady and Queen her gracious Majesty, Elizabeth.*

"DEAR SIR RICHARD HAMSTEAD,—I write you this, first to convey to you my love, as my old friend and companion of more than thirty years ago. Dost remember, Dick, of that meeting of ours at the old house near Southend, and of those after days at the Red House at Rouen? But of that I must not speak now, or I should never get on to the matter in hand. But I hope to see you shortly, Dick. Either you must come to me, or I will come to thee, and together we will hold revels as we talk of the old times.

"And second I write, Sir Richard, to ask you to pay good heed to what John Trenoweth may say, for he is an old and tried friend of our family. For while he calls himself our servant, he is more friend than servant, having good blood in his veins, knows something of letters, and carries as good a sword as can be found this side the Tamar.

"Concerning what he hath to say I will not write here, Sir Richard, but pay good heed to what he may tell thee, for we have talked over the matters many times; and as my son Mawgan and thy son Rupert be nearly the same age, and I trust thy son Rupert is a well-grown lad, as my son Mawgan is, standing, by the grace of God, six feet two inches in his stockings, and can throw any man of his girth in the county. So after you and John Trenoweth have discussed this matter fully, and if thou be willing and thy son Rupert be willing, and of course he will be, or he is no son of

thine (even now I would know the reason why, if Mawgan did not obey my bidding without a murmur), well, see to it that the business is taken in hand right quickly, so that in a few days from the time thou dost read this, I shall see what kind of a lad Rupert is, and then, by the blessing of God, see him and Mawgan start on their holy mission.

"And that is all I can write, Sir Richard. First, because written messages are dangerous in these days; and second, because it would be impossible for me to tell thee all that is in my mind by means of pen and paper. Even as it is, this letter has, owing to my being a poor penman, cost me many hours of anxious labour.—Your obedient servant and faithful friend,

"Tom Killigrew.

"*Nota Bene*.—Please convey to your dear lady, Dick, my sincere devotion; also that of my wife, although, as yet, they have not seen each other.—T.K."

This letter, now couched in formal terms, and again in those of friendship, I read carefully through, and, having done so, turned to John Trenoweth, in order to hear what he had to say. I saw, too, that my father was anxious to know what was in the Cornishman's mind.

"I pray you give good heed," said Trenoweth, "for my master's words are of no mean import."

CHAPTER II

JOHN TRENOWETH'S STORY

BUT the man did not speak freely. He seemed to have some difficulty in shaping his thoughts, also of finding fit words wherewith to convey them. So much was this the case that I presently began to get suspicious, but I judged afterwards that so anxious was he to do his master's bidding well, and without mistake, that fear got hold of him, and, as all the world knows, fear is not helpful in matters of this kind.

"My master admires not Sir Francis Drake," he said presently.

"Then your master must be a fool," I replied hastily, for I could brook no word that slighted Sir Francis. "Why, man, think of the times he hath——"

"Steady, steady, young master," said John Trenoweth. "Master Killigrew admires him greatly as a rover, as a stout fighter, and as a prince among English sailors, but he doth not rate him highly as a clever, far-seeing man. He can meet blows with better blows, plans with better plans—that is, when all is fair and above board—but he knows not the mind of the Spaniard, he cannot understand the underground way in which he works. In short, Sir Francis is a great admiral, but he is not a far-seeing man where the Spaniard is concerned."

At this I was about to break out again into a warm defence of the hero of our day, but my father cut me short.

"Explain yourself more fully, Master John Trenoweth," he said, "and give us examples of your meaning."

"This, Sir Richard," said the Cornishman. "Let him meet the Spaniard in open sea, and the Spaniard becomes a child to him; but let him meet the Spaniard in council, and then Sir Francis becomes the child."

"Facts have not proved it," I cried hotly.

"They have proved it again and again," said Trenoweth. "Sir Francis sails against the Spaniard in open day, and fights him in open day, and when he has beaten him he thinks that all is over; but he doth not dream of the thousand schemes in the Spaniard's mind, he cannot tell us what the Jesuits are doing, he doth not know what underground plots are being made against our Queen and country. In truth, when we come to think of it, we do not know our

danger ; we do not know what force the Spaniard can bring to British shores ; and as a consequence—God forgive her for being mistaken ! but her gracious Majesty is stingy in money, stingy in meat, stingy in power, stingy in men. In truth, I much doubt if she realises that the Spaniard is serious."

At this I was silent ; for, much as I loved her Majesty, I could not but sigh at the way she had treated some of the bravest men which God ever gave to a monarch.

" Master Killigrew hath thought much concerning this," said John Trenoweth, " and he greatly desires that all the Spaniard's plans may be discovered ; that the amount of help he can get from Italy, Austria, and other countries be calculated to a nicety, together with such information as, when conveyed to her Majesty, will make her consent to her Parliament being liberal to her servants."

" But how is this to be found out ? " asked my father.

" Only by Englishmen going thither," said John Trenoweth.

" An Englishman's life would not be worth a silver groat in Spain," said my father. " Why, think of the men who have dared to set foot there. There was Biddicombe of Devon, son to old Sir John ; he went to Spain, and what happened ? God only knows, except that, under the pretence of saving his soul, he was placed on the rack, his flesh was torn with red-hot pincers, and afterwards he was burnt. And he was not the only one. There was Walter Raleigh's cousin, and poor Ned Blount, besides many others. The man who goes to Spain is lost. If he goes as a Catholic, he is never allowed to rest until he promises to fight against his country, and if he goes as a Protestant, well—God a' mercy on him ! "

" Nevertheless, for the sake of our beloved Queen and our country, we should not falter," said John Trenoweth. " Besides—well, God help me !—if no one will go with me, I will go alone, and willingly will I die if I can make two Spaniards less."

At this he swore a great oath, and his eyes blazed like coals of fire.

" What mean you ? " said my father.

" Mean ! " cried John Trenoweth. " This, Sir Richard. I am a sinful man, and a coward, for I have lived in quietness and ease while my own sweetheart is in Spain to-day, where she hath been for twenty years—that is, if she be alive. And what doth all this mean, Sir Richard ? Forgive me if I make not my meaning plain, for when I think of these things my head feels like a great burning furnace ; but if she is alive, it means that either she hath gone over to the

abominations of Rome, which are worse than death, or she is at this time suffering all the torments which the hell-hounds of the Inquisition can invent. And if she be dead, Sir Richard, the Spaniards have killed her—killed her, I tell you !—while I, her sweetheart, her promised husband, have stayed here in England, stayed in the fair county of Cornwall, and have allowed the Spaniards to work their will on her."

At this my father gave a start, and placed his left hand on his sword hilt, and stamped his foot like a man in anger, while I scorned the fellow for being a poltroon and a coward.

"A sweetheart of yours went to Spain, and you never tried to——"

"A moment, Sir Richard, and let me tell my story as I may, and, mark you, there is much more that will take long in telling, for what you have heard is not half—nay, nor a quarter of the whole. As for your scorn of me, I deserve it, and ten times more. I have been a coward—aye, and worse than a coward, and yet judge me not too soon, for one thing is mixed up with another so that an honest man can barely tell where he stands. But here is the fact : Long years ago I loved Esther Truscott as truly as a boy ever loved a maid. She loved me, too, I believe, but she would not consent to marry me, because she was the companion of Mistress Anne Tremayne, and promised to stay with her as long as she willed. As you know, Mistress Anne Tremayne is the sister of Mistress Killigrew, my master's wife, and therefore he had a special interest in her. Being older than Mistress Killigrew, the Tremayne estates came by right to her, but when she consented to marry the Spaniard, who came to Falmouth in the days when Esther and I were courting, her father, old Sir John Tremayne, swore by God, his Queen, and his country that not one acre should she have. By what means he did it I know not, but this same Don Basilio Fernandio de Valencia persuaded Mistress Anne to leave her father and her home, and accompany him to his home in Spain ; and my Esther, so much did she love her mistress, went with her, leaving me alone. I know what I ought to have done : I ought to have followed her ; but I did not. For one thing, Master Killigrew told me it was madness to think of it ; for another, I heard again and again of the English being tortured and burnt as heretics ; and while I never loved another woman, I tried to harden my heart against Esther, telling myself that she was a fickle jade, that she cared nothing for me, and was far happier with the accursed Spaniards. And thus the years passed on. Old Sir John Tremayne still lived at Tremayne,

refusing to hear a word about his daughter who had gone away with the Spaniard, declaring she was no child of his, and repeating again and again that not one penny of his money, nor one acre of his land, should ever go either to her or—should she have any—her children. And so I, my heart aching all the time, kept quiet. Knowing something of learning, I became steward to Master Killigrew, but, being also somewhat of a fighter, I have accompanied my master in some of his cruises to the Mediterranean, and twice have I fought the Spaniard. But I have never landed on Spanish soil and never have I seen Esther, much as I have longed to do both.

"Well, some time ago a friend of my master, Sir John Puddicombe, took a Spanish galleon, and in talking with one of the prisoners he found out that Don Basilio de Valencia was dead, and that since his death his widow hath fallen under the suspicion of the Inquisition, and that she is given a certain time to recant, during the which means will be used to bring her to repentance. Moreover, much discussion hath arisen about her marriage with Don Basilio de Valencia. It is held that, while she was wedded to him according to English law, she was not wedded according to the laws of Spain and the Church. Thus they argue that, while she is heir to the English estates, she hath no right, neither hath her offspring right, to her husband's estates in Spain. Concerning this I cannot say much, not being a match for Jesuit lies. But this is not all; it was told Sir John Puddicombe that an English companion of the Doña de Valencia was also suspected of heresy, and that, unless she recanted, she would be burnt with her mistress. Now, who can that woman be but Esther, Sir Richard? I try to think it is not, and I seek to engage in all sorts of foolish quarrels, and to fill my mind with wild and hare-brained thoughts, in order that I may not go mad, but I cannot. I believe it is she."

"Go on with your story," said my father sternly.

"When my master heard of it, Sir Richard (for I always call him my master, although he will have it that I am his good friend), he straightway told me, and then I got on my knees, and begged him to allow me to go to Spain. But he told me that for me to go alone would be pure craziness, and that he must think more about what he had heard. That night he went to see Sir John Tremayne, who is still alive, and told him what he had heard, whereupon Sir John forgot all the things he had said about his eldest daughter, and besought him to go to Spain and save his child. As you know, Sir John is now an old man, and is failing fast;

and verily I believe that if his daughter be not saved he will die soon ; and yet he told my master that, if he would not go, he would himself man a vessel and sail for Lisbon, and from thence go to Spain to save his daughter."

"Well, and then?" said my father, as he saw John Trenoweth hesitate.

"Well, my master cannot leave Falmouth. He is the governor of Pendennis Castle ; he is under command of the Queen to guard Falmouth harbour, and be ready to fight the Spaniards, should they come near. Nevertheless, he and I have talked many hours concerning this matter, until not long ago a vessel called at Falmouth harbour, and the captain of the same vessel, Vivian by name, told him that your son, Sir Richard, Master Rupert here, was come back from the wars, that his wound was nearly healed, and that he longed sorely to be fighting the Spaniards again. This set my master thinking, and Master Mawgan, being now a man grown, though he hath not seen service, is itching to be at those proud dons, and seems not altogether unfitted to go to Spain. Still, as my master saith, young Mawgan knows not their lingo nor their ways, and, being only twenty-four on the 15th of July, may do foolish things. Then again, I, who am to go with him, while not altogether a fool, am also ignorant of their lingo, and should, so my master thinks, do more harm than good ; that is, unless someone goes as a leader, who can talk to the Spaniard in his own tongue, and who knows his crookedness. This led Master Killigrew to think of Master Rupert here. For Captain Vivian hath it that, although young, Master Rupert is cunning beyond his years, and he also saith that on more than one occasion he hath proved more than a master for the Spaniard, both with tongue, and wits, and the sword. Besides, Master Killigrew remembers the time, Sir Richard, when you and he were friends together, and the promises you made to each other.

"This being so, he drew up the letter I have brought to you, and I have travelled with all haste for five days, and here I am, Sir Richard, having told my story badly ; for, since I have heard the news about Esther, I am not my own man, nor never shall be until my fingers are around the throats of the Spaniards who have made my poor maid suffer."

"And this is all your story, John Trenoweth?" said my father presently.

"I think it is," replied the Cornishman, "and yet I am not sure, for when I think about Esther I forget many things which I ought to bear in mind."

"Then, as I understand it, my old friend Killigrew wishes Rupert here to return with you to Cornwall, and then to take young Mawgan and you to Spain to find out the truth concerning the fate of Sir John Tremayne's daughter."

"Yes, Sir Richard, and also at the same time to discover what we can of the Spaniards' plans about England, and whether they purport coming to fight us, and with what force. God forgive me! but when I think of Esther I forget my duty to Queen and country; but this must not be forgotten, Sir Richard, for my master believes that if we can but put the truth before her Majesty, neither Lord Hawkins, nor Sir Francis Drake, nor Sir Richard Grenville will ever again have to grieve because the Queen is stingy both of men and money. Master Killigrew believes that Master Rupert could find out many things which would be of great value."

"But how are they to get to Spain?" said my father. "Every Spanish port is safely guarded. The King hath given command to attack every English vessel, and to take the sailors to the Inquisitors, who may, for the glory of God —may Heaven forgive me for saying the words!—work their will upon them."

"This we know right well, Sir Richard, and concerning the means of getting there I do not know, for my master hath told me nothing. Moreover, Master Rupert will naturally have to be consulted. But this I know: Sir John Tremayne says that no money shall be wanting, and that whatever Master Rupert thinks we need shall be given."

"What do you think of it, Rupert?" asked my father.

"Think of it!" I cried. "I think God hath sent John Trenoweth hither, and that right gladly will I go with him to Falmouth town, when, after having taken counsel with Master Killigrew, I will go to Spain, and do all that is required of me."

"It is a perilous mission," said my father thoughtfully.

"And what then!" I cried. "God hath given us arms to fight, swords to carry, and brains to think!"

"Hath the Doña de Valencia children?" said my father presently.

"Ah!" cried John Trenoweth, "I had forgotten that. Thank you for reminding me, Sir Richard, for otherwise I should have left out what you ought to know. Yes, she hath a daughter, who hath been brought up to hate both the English and our holy reformed religion. She hath been brought up in one of those prison houses of Rome called a convent. Moreover, the Spaniards have it that, her mother being married according to English law, this daughter is

the rightful owner to Sir John Tremayne's lands. It is also believed that she, being under the influence of the Church, will at the proper time be made to enter the religious life, and give these same Tremayne lands to the Jesuits. And this leads me to another thing, Sir Richard, and my master told me to be sure to make full report of this. A man who was once your enemy, and with whom you fought more than once, hath mixed himself up in the matter. He knows our laws, and our customs, and Sir John Puddicombe told my master that it is he who hath planned it all. It is he who will bring the daughter of Sir John Tremayne to the stake; it is he who will get hold of the Tremayne estates, and hand them over to the Jesuits; and it is he in particular that we shall have to fight."

"His name? his name?" said my father eagerly.

"Señor Toledo," said John Trenoweth, "and I am told that he is as deep as the Red Sea, in which King Pharaoh's armies were drowned, and as cruel as his master the devil."

"That he is!" cried my father. "Ah! and I might have killed him years ago. Twice did I have him at my mercy. Twice! Look! that is the sword which I took from him. Señor Toledo! John Trenoweth, I fear greatly—I fear greatly. If that man hath determined on the death of Sir John Tremayne's daughter, she will die. If your old sweetheart be in his hands, hope not to see her again. Moreover, he will work his will on this daughter of the Doña de Valencia; he will poison her mind more and more against her mother and her country."

Now these words angered me greatly, for they were not the true words of Sir Richard Hamstead. They told of a fear that was unworthy of him, and of a spirit which seemed to me almost craven.

"No, father," I said. "If he be the kind of man you say he is, all the more reason why he should be met by Englishmen who fear neither the devil nor his servants. It is well known that you outwitted him long years ago, and that, in spite of all he could do, you won my mother for your wife."

"God worked a miracle for us," said my father. "But for the coming of the messengers proclaiming the death of Queen Mary, she would have been burnt, and I also. But God doth not work miracles every day."

"God is not dead," I cried. "Time after time hath He saved her gracious Majesty from the snares of these devils. Time after time hath He helped His servants to overcome the Spaniards. Think of what Sir Francis hath done again and again, and shall we turn craven now?

Shall we leave an English lady in the Spaniards' hands? Shall we allow them to work their will on them, and never lift hand to try——"

"Stop!" cried my father. "Who said we should never try to save them? In God's name, not I! No, my lad, you shall go to Falmouth town, and you shall hold counsel with my old friend Tom Killigrew, and afterwards you shall go to Spain, and do all that a man may to save them. If it is the will of God that you shall bring them back, then I shall have another proof that He doth still work miracles, but if not—well, you shall still go, Rupert. If it is His will that you suffer at the Spaniards' hands, well, still go. Better die that way, aye, a thousand times better die that way, than—knowing what John Trenoweth hath told us—remain here in ease."

"Spoken like the Sir Richard Hamstead I have heard of," said John Trenoweth, his eyes ablaze, and his hand grasping his sword hilt. "Ah, Sir Richard, but you be a poor Papist!"

"Peace, man," said my father. "As to being a Papist, I follow my old father. What was good enough for him is good enough for me. I know but little, and trouble less, about the niceties of the doctrines concerning which Queen Elizabeth hath not made up her mind. But I hate burnings and cruelties: I hate the Spaniard and all his ways. Besides, I am an Englishman, and I will stand by my country and by my people, even if the Pope himself bids me fight against them. Poor Papist! Well, I may be, for I believe that my wife, although a Protestant, is the holiest woman that ever walked God's earth. All the same, I do not renounce the old faith. No, by the Mass, no!"

At this I laughed in high good humour, for I saw that my father believed in liberty of conscience as much as Hugh Latimer himself, and when I remembered that he had never interfered with my mother, who taught every one of us the Reformed faith, I felt sure that he held by the old faith rather because of sentiment than conviction.

"And when can Master Rupert start?" asked John Trenoweth eagerly.

"Start! Ah, yes." I saw a shadow come over his face, and then I felt sure that he believed he was consenting for me to go to my death. "Start! Ah, yes," he repeated; "but we must talk with your mother, my lad, we must talk with her, and—John Trenoweth, forgive me, you must be hungry and thirsty. I will order food and drink, man, and then we will call my lady in, and we will talk over the whole matter together."

CHAPTER III

HOW I LEFT HAMSTEAD MANOR

WHILE John Trenoweth was in the dining hall, I, as may be imagined, fell to thinking over what I had heard, and although I was rejoicing that my days of idleness were over, I knew that I was going upon an expedition from which I should probably never return alive. Not that I feared ; thank God ! it was not that ; all the same, I could not help being thoughtful. For, as all the world knows, it was regarded as certain death at this time for an English Protestant to put his foot on Spanish soil. For Philip II. of Spain bore an ill name among those who loved our gracious Queen. For a long time, in the strength of his marriage with Mary, he had regarded himself as the rightful King of our country, or at least so he had made out to the world. Moreover, he had paid court to Elizabeth, only to be repulsed time after time, and this had increased his bitterness towards us. Added to all this, we had helped to oppose his will in Flanders, and had again and again flouted his ships in the Spanish Main. Taken altogether, therefore, leaving religion out of the question, it was natural that he should seek to be even with us. Time after time had news come to us that English sailors had been taken prisoners by the Spanish, and had afterwards been dragged before the Inquisitors, to be burned "for the glory of God."

It will be seen, therefore, that to go to Spain was no small matter ; especially was this the case when the purpose of my going was borne in mind. Whether my mission was regarded from its political or from its domestic standpoint, the perils remained the same. If I were to try and learn anything of Spanish plans, I must, as it were, put my head in the lion's mouth ; while, if I attempted the release of old Sir John Tremayne's daughter from the Inquisitors, my peril was just as great. Moreover, I reflected that I should have to match my wits against those of Señor Toledo, who, if my father had gauged him truly, was as cunning as the devil himself.

All this was staggering enough ; nevertheless, I rejoiced in it. I had seen enough service to keep from fancying I could fulfil my mission without much difficulty ; but, on the other hand, the blood of youth coursed through my veins, and made me long to be away.

By the time John Trenoweth had finished his meal I had gone far to map out my course of action—at least, up to a certain point, leaving further developments until I had seen Master Killigrew and young Mawgan.

When my father and the Cornishman returned to the room again, they were accompanied by my mother, who, much as we loved our father, held the warmest place in all our hearts. Why this was so, I cannot pretend to explain fully. But it was so. Each one of us loved and admired our father as much as any father in England was loved and admired. Nevertheless, it was to our mother that Dick and Faith and I always confided our secrets, and to whom we went for advice. Even in this case, although I had told my father I would go to Spain with Mawgan Killigrew, I should never have done so without her full consent and blessing, because what is a man worth if he acts against the will of the best mother that ever breathed ?

I remember her now, as she sat by the window that September day in the year 1587, and, although she was nearer fifty than forty years old, she looked but a young woman. In truth, she was but a young woman, and far more beautiful than ninety-nine out of every hundred of the young maidens of our time. And, as I watched her face, and thought of her goodness, I did not wonder that my father was willing to go through fire and water to win her as his bride. I, who was twenty-four years old, and who had never been in love, knew that if I met a maid half so fair and half so good as she I would be ready to face death for a year of Sundays in order to win her smile. For that matter, I always regarded her as the pattern of what a woman should be, and I believe that the reason I had never fallen in love was because, when I began to compare the maidens I knew with my mother, they fell so miserably short both of her beauty and her goodness.

" Dost ever intend to wed ? " said Sir Walter Raleigh to me one day.

" Aye," I replied.

" When ? " said he.

" When I meet a woman as beautiful and as good as my mother," I replied.

" Never until then ? " said he.

" Never," I replied.

" Then thou wilt never wed, Rupert, for there is but one woman in the world that can match her, and she is neither for thee nor any other man."

I said no more to him at the time, for I knew the woman of whom he was thinking, and knew, moreover, that it were

sacrilege to think of her as anything but "The Virgin Queen."

But to my story. My mother sat by the window, with a somewhat anxious look on her face, for she had already heard an inkling of the reasons for which John Trenoweth had come to Hamstead Manor.

"You say that there is need for Rupert to go to Spain," said my mother. "What is the need, Sir Richard?" For thus she always addressed my father when others than our own family were present.

"Let John Trenoweth tell his story again," said my father, whereupon the Cornishman began to speak, even as he had spoken to us, of Spanish plots and of English ignorance thereof. He spoke of the Jesuits, who, in spite of all endeavours to put them down, were still in England, poisoning English Catholics against their Queen, and who were in constant communication with the King of Spain.

"But what is all this to us?" said my mother. "Why should Rupert go into a country where there is neither kindness nor mercy, in order to know what the Queen hath a hundred other means of knowing, and by other men?"

For be it known that my mother, strong Protestant as she was, did not love our Queen as much as my father thought she should.

As all the world knows, Elizabeth's religious views were very uncertain, and, while she granted a certain religious freedom, she was none too kind to those of her subjects who had made her great.

On hearing this, John Trenoweth went off on the other track. He spoke of Mistress Anne Tremayne, and of the danger in which she stood; he told of old Sir John Tremayne's sorrow, and of his love for Esther Truscott, and then I saw a change come over my mother. For politics she cared but little, but her woman's heart went out to another woman's danger.

"Anne Tremayne!" she said. "Why, I know her, Sir Richard! Her father brought her to Queen Elizabeth's Court, and we became friendly. It grieved me much when I heard that she married the Spaniard. And she is in the power of the Inquisition—she is in danger of being burnt! It must not be, it must not be! She must be saved. Why—oh, I remember—you remember, Dick—when—when ——Oh, God help her!" And, forgetting John Trenoweth, my mother went across the room to my father's side, as though the memory of that day when my father snatched her from the awful doom which happened to so many during Mary's reign were too much for her.

My father put his arm around her as a youth puts his arms round the maid of his heart, and held her to him for a moment; but only for a moment, for my mother lifted her head, and, turning to John Trenoweth, said, "Tell me more—tell me all, my man!"

When John Trenoweth had finished his story, my mother started up with flashing eyes.

"Rupert, my son," she said, "it is the call of God. For many days I have wondered why you should have been wounded, and then kept here in idleness; but now I know. It is the will of God! Go, my son, and may our Lord and Saviour be your safety and guide!"

"Aye, but when, mother?" I asked.

"When?" she cried. "Ask when, even while an English gentlewoman, and my old friend to boot, stands in danger of the faggot? There is only one time, and that is now! Get you gone—if not this night, then at dawn to-morrow. There is no time to lose when Señor Toledo hath aught to do with any matter. Aye, my son, and if thou canst only save her and her dear ones by fighting even to the death, then fight to the death. It is the call of God!"

And this my mother said while her lips trembled and a look of great apprehension was in her eyes.

"But oh, Rupert!" she continued, presently, "go in Christ's name, and in Christ's strength. Go to save a Christian Englishwoman from an awful doom. Never sully your mission by a base thought or a base deed, my son. If you have to fight, fight in Christ's name; if you have to try and outwit the Spaniard, pray for wisdom and guidance. . . . And you say she hath a child, too!" she went on, turning to John Trenoweth. "A daughter, very near the age of my Faith. What is her name?"

"Of the child I know but little," said Trenoweth. "But I fear she is an enemy of her mother and her mother's faith. She is half a Spaniard, and hath been reared in a convent, and I am told that she consents to her mother's death."

"Put that down as a lie," said my mother. "Anne Tremayne's child could not do so. And yet—God only knows what teaching and training can do. But your duty is plain, Rupert. Save the mother, save the waiting woman, and may God give you grace to save the child. At this very hour I will see that your saddle-bags are filled with all things necessary, and take your father's sword, my son. It hath never been used in an unholy quarrel, and you, Sir Richard, you will see that Rupert lacks for nothing!"

With that my mother went away with all speed, while my father continued to talk with John Trenoweth concerning the well-being of his old friend, Tom Killigrew, and of other matters relating to Cornwall.

As may be imagined, my mother's words had put nerve into my arm and warmth into my heart, and presently, when my brother Dick came into the room, I told him with much spirit of what had taken place, and of what I was about to do.

"I wish it were I, Rupert," said Dick, "and yet I know not. You have a quicker wit, and carry a better sword than I. So go, my brother, and may God bring you safely home again!"

Of all the talk that took place that night it is needless that I should speak; for, although I love to think of the way that my sister Faith fondled me, and called me her own brave brother, and although I cannot help recalling with pride the words my father spoke to me, these things have but little part in the story I have to tell. Besides, I have much to write concerning matters of far more interest than what took place at Hamstead Manor, matters that will take long to tell. For I may as well make confession here that my journey to Spain was no stage play, neither were my adventures of the nature that may be seen at the Globe Theatre, where Master Will Shakespeare so pleases the gaping crowd who come to see him act and hear the fine words he hath written.

Early next morning, then, I was ready to start. John Trenoweth's nag had been substituted by a stronger and fleeter animal, while the best horse in my father's stables had been given to me. I was dressed in all due finery, because, as my mother said, a son of hers who was in the service of Christ must not appear as a solemn hot gospeller, but as the son of Sir Richard Hamstead, the bravest fighter and the wariest councillor in Elizabeth's Court. This, as may be imagined, pleased me much, for youth loves gay clothing and a good horse. I also carried a good number of golden eagles in my purse, and so, fired by the thought of what lay before me, I laughed with great merriment as I bade them all good morning. It was well, moreover, that I carried a brave heart; otherwise I should surely have broken down and cried like a baby before I took a last look at my home. It is true my father's lips trembled not, neither did his voice quiver, while Dick laughed gaily, and told me not to lose my head over any Spanish señorita; but when it came to mother and Faith, I was well nigh forgetting that I could call Francis Drake, Walter Raleigh,

and Richard Grenville my friends, so soft did my heart become. In this was no wonder, for my sister Faith hung about me so, and kissed and caressed me so fondly, that I thought I should never be able to leave her, and when at last she ran indoors to hide her tears I had still my mother to part from. And this was the hardest of all. Not that she moaned or repined, for she was too proud and too brave a woman to do either. Nay, it was the fact that I saw her mother's love struggling against her sense of duty that made my heart bleed. I could see that her heart was breaking, and yet she spoke cheerily, and laughed: it was that which well nigh unmanned me.

"Go, my son, in Christ's name!" she said as she embraced me for the last time.

"Yes, mother," I said.

"And you will never do aught that you will be afraid to tell me about—will you, my son?"

"Never, mother."

"And if ever you are tempted to be cruel, or do a wrong deed, if ever you are tempted to crush one weaker than you out of a spirit of revenge (for God hath blessed you with great strength, Rupert), if ever you are tempted to sin, you will think of Christ—and—and your mother—won't you, Rupert?"

"Aye, mother, I promise."

"And—and, Rupert——"

"Yes, mother, what is it?"

"It may be you'll be tempted in many ways, ways of which young men cannot speak even to their mothers; if you are, Rupert—if you are——"

"God help me, mother, I will think of you, and I will try to be worthy of you—then I shall do no wrong."

"Yes, think of me, my dear son—and think of the Lord Christ Who died for you. Be pure in thought, my son, and you will be pure in life."

"God helping me, I will, mother," I said, "and by His help I will never do aught that you would wish undone," and with that I rode away, feeling as if God had spoken to me as well as my mother.

I had not gone far, when I heard my name again, and, turning back, I saw my mother coming towards me.

"Rupert," she said as I dismounted, "you are going to Spain, the land of persecution and the Inquisition. It might be—God save you from it!—but you may be tried even as—as—as I——"

"Mother," I cried, "I will die before I prove false to my faith," and with that I kissed her again, and mounted

my horse, while my mother gave me a smile which lives in my heart and memory even to this day.

Of how I kept my promises, my history must tell, for it is not fit that I should write it here, but as I rode by John Trenoweth's side, I thanked God for my mother, and vowed again and again that I would never do aught of which I should be ashamed to speak to her in all fullness.

"And have ye any desire to try a fall with me, Master Rupert Hamstead?" said John Trenoweth after a few minutes' silence.

"What mean you?" I said.

"Oh! the fall concerning which you were so keen when I rode up to you yesterday."

I looked at his face, and saw that his grey eyes twinkled.

"We will both try a fall with the Spaniards instead," I replied.

"Amen to that with all my heart," he replied, "and yet methinks we shall have it before we reach Falmouth town. Four times did I pick a quarrel on my way hither all for the purpose of forgetting—that—that——"

"Aye, but we will save her, John Trenoweth, and I will be at your wedding."

"No, no, Master Rupert, I fear that will never be. And it is when I have such fears that I feel I must do something in order to forget my trouble, and to forget the fact that I have neglected my Esther all these years. I tell you——"

"Think of how we are to get to her, John Trenoweth," I cried. "Picture to yourself how she will look when she sees you. Fancy yourself cutting down Spaniards in order that you may get to her."

"Aye, aye, that I will; but promise me this, Master Rupert: if I cannot drive evil, despairing thoughts out of my mind, will you fight with me, wrestle with me? It is the only thing that makes me forget—it is the only thing that gives me joy."

I laughed aloud at this, but nevertheless I promised him, even as he desired.

Of our first day's journey there is but little to record. We saw but few people, because we did not pass through London, and when, as the second day passed away, and nothing of interest happened, I imagined that we should get to our journey's end without adventure of any sort.

Towards the evening of the second day, however, as we began to think of the place where we should spend our night, I saw, riding some little distance in front of me, two men. As far as I could judge, they were well mounted, and were attired as cavaliers; but, as we drew near, I could

not help thinking that their attire was somewhat out of harmony with the way they sat their horses.

"This is a lonely spot," said John Trenoweth, and I could not help agreeing with him, for we were far from any habitation, and the country looked lonesome beyond words.

"I don't think we need fear yonder men," said John, after looking at them quietly for a few moments. "It is true they carry swords, and they ride good horses; but I know many a ploughboy who can sit a horse better."

"No; I should judge them to be clothiers or something of that sort," I replied, "and they carry swords and wear gay apparel in order to try and appear as men of rank."

"Good morrow, worthy sirs," they said, as we rode up, and it seemed to me that they had ridden slowly so that we might overtake them.

We returned their greeting and waited for them to proceed.

"Go you far?" they asked, presently.

I mentioned the town at which we had thought of spending the night.

"Ah! that is where we hope to stay. If it pleases you, we will ride together. We be anxious to fall in with good company, for we be dealing with important matters. In truth, our hope is to find the whereabouts of two noted Jesuits, who we suspect are being housed at Willacombe."

At this I pricked up my ears greatly, especially as I thought I saw the two men exchange glances.

CHAPTER IV

THE HAPPENING AT "THE VIRGIN QUEEN"

"THE inn is a safe inn—that I can vouch for," continued one of them presently. "It is true some may be led to think the innkeeper, Thomas Toadsby by name, is somewhat of a turncoat, seeing he hath changed the name of his house three times since he hath lived there. First he called it 'King Edward's Arms,' then when Mary came to the throne he called it 'Queen Mary's Head,' while now, 'The Virgin Queen' is on the sign-post."

"He is like many others in that matter," I replied. "There be not only innkeepers, but priests who have altered with the altering times."

"Aye, I suppose so, but Thomas Toadsby is safe now. The last time I stayed at the inn I found that he not only kept good sack, but also kept a keen eye for heretics. I tell you he will not serve a customer who shows any leanings towards the abominations of Mary's time."

"Think you the Jesuits make any headway in England?" I asked.

"Difficult to say," replied the man who had taken the part of spokesman. "Campion's death hath made them very wary, and since Father Parsons thought it best to leave the country for safety's sake, they have greatly lacked a leading mind."

"Have you ever met Father Parsons?" I asked.

"I believe I saw him once," said the man.

"What was he like?" I asked, little thinking that before many months were over this man's features would be engraved on my mind and memory in such a way that to the day of my death I shall never be able to forget them. For, as all the world knows, Father Parsons was at this time the main instrument used by the Pope for seeking to win England back to the Romish faith. He was the topic of conversation among many thousands of people, and many there were who thought they would get a safe entrance into heaven by bringing him to justice. Pictures of his face had been scattered all over the land, warrants for his arrest had been issued again and again, while all sorts of inducements had been offered to effect his capture. But Father Parsons proved too clever for his pursuers. He got a new

name far more often than he got a new coat, and he had a strange way of ingratiating himself into the confidence of those who hated all Jesuits right heartily. It is said that Queen Elizabeth herself feared him, because he was ever in communication with Philip of Spain, and was also used as a medium of communication between the Pope and the King. It was believed, moreover, that he had more influence with the Jesuits than even the General of the order, and that he had secretly succeeded in persuading English Catholics to be ready to take up arms against Queen Elizabeth when the time should come for Philip to invade England.

In truth, so great was the mystery of this man that he was believed by some to possess more than human power. Some held that his power came direct from the devil, while others were of the opinion that the Pope had invested him with some of his own authority. Be that as it may, nearly everyone believed that, should Philip be able to land his soldiers on our shores, and to succeed in conquering our people, it would be because Father Parsons had caused the English Catholics to fight against their own country.

This being so, it was no wonder that I somewhat forgot my caution, and eagerly asked the man by my side questions concerning this notorious Jesuit.

"Strange as it may seem," he said, "I believe I saw him at the inn to which we are going to-night at Willacombe. I was empowered to arrest him, and I had caused to be placed at the 'Virgin Queen' and other hostels and taverns the picture of this notorious man. I fear me it was not an over good picture, but still, it did in some degree suggest his face. Well, I was sitting in the inn where several men were sitting over their sack, and talking with one another about this picture.

"'Marry,' said one, 'but if Father Parsons appears, I will get him dragged to London straightway. I will get a hundred angels to put in my pouch, and our gracious Queen will remember me for ever.'

"'Would you know him, think you?' said another.

"'Know him!' said the first. 'I would know him in the dark.'

"While they were talking a man came up on horseback, and shouted for the ostler.

"'And whose picture is that, ostler?' he said, as the man took his horse.

"'That,' said the ostler, 'is the most famous tool the devil ever forged. It is no less than Father Parsons, the Jesuit!'

"'What!' cried the traveller, 'Parsons the Jesuit, that son of Belial! How dare you, sirrah, insult faithful servants of the Queen by flaunting the picture of such a man in their faces! Down with it, I say!' and before the ostler could stop him he tore it down from the wall, and stamped it underfoot.

"'How dare you,' he cried to Toadsby, as he came in, 'how dare you pollute my eyes by hanging the picture of such a child of hell so near your stepping-block?'*

"'I only did it in the hope of catching him,' said Toadsby.

"'Ah, well, on that count I will forgive you,' he said, 'but let us drive such a wretch from our minds. Father Parsons will not come this way, you may depend. But since I find so many loyal friends to our Queen and the reformed religion here, I will pay for a pint of sack to each and all.'

"At this, you may depend, all greeted the newcomer right heartily, and we spent some hours drinking with him. But know you who it was?"

"Father Parsons," I replied.

"Aye, that I believe it was. For afterwards, when I learnt more about him, I discovered that that same night he left the inn and stayed at the house of Sir Richard Carnforth, who was a bigoted Papist, and when I came to reflect on matters I remembered that his face was mightily like the one in the picture. Besides, afterwards, when Parsons had escaped to Spain, Master John Peacock, Sir Richard Carnforth's steward, told me that the man whom we took to be such a friend of the Reformed religion was not less than this terrible Jesuit. What think you of the story, young master?"

"I think I would like to have had the chance you had," I replied. "I warrant me the Jesuit would not have got off so easily."

"Think you so? Ha! ha! Well, perchance not, for you look a shrewd young gallant. But you will not have the chance, my young master, for he is in Spain now, and an English Protestant dare not put his foot on Spanish soil in these days."

"That's as may be," I said, with a meaning look towards John Trenoweth, who, however, was looking sourly towards his horse's head.

"I fear me not. I would to heaven that I knew of

* This story about Father Parsons is perfectly true in all particulars.—J.H.

someone who did dare, for I have a cousin there, concerning whose fate I fear greatly."

"A Protestant?" I asked.

"Aye, a right loyal Protestant. He went in great zeal to Toledo. For what purpose I may not say."

"And why not say, my master?" I asked.

"Because no man knows who's who in these days," he replied. "Why, think! here am I holding the Queen's warrant to arrest Jesuits; look at it, young master" (and he produced a piece of parchment), "yet was I in danger not long ago of being arrested as a Jesuit myself."

I looked at the parchment, and saw that Master Nicholas Seyton and Master Francis Belmont, being tried and proved servants of the Queen, and having shown their devotion on many occasions by bringing traitors to justice, were authorized to arrest Jesuits and to command the help of all loyal men to assist them in their undertakings.

"I am Nicholas Seyton," said the man, "and my friend here is Master Francis Belmont, yet in spite of this warrant both of us have been suspected of being Jesuits."

"Not after you had shown this?" I said questioningly.

"No, but that is not all. There is another side to this story. Not so many months ago, while doing our work, we fell in with some men who purported to be men of standing and loyal subjects. We got to talking, and, believing in the truth of what they said, we told them of the work we had in hand, and how we hoped to bring two notorious Jesuits to justice. We even went so far, under the influence of a quart of good sack, to tell them some of our plans. Well—would you believe it?—they were themselves friends of the Jesuits, and gave warning to the very men we hoped to drag to London town! What think you of that, young master?"

"I think you must have been easily taken in," I replied.

"Aye, perchance we were; but this kind of thing doth not happen again, young master. 'Once bitten, twice shy,' as the old proverb hath it, and so for the future we tell none of our plans until we be sure to whom we speak."

I was about to parley further with these men, for the warmth of their speech and the mission upon which they were engaged pleased me much; but at this moment John Trenoweth's horse stumbled, and he dismounted, and looked at the horse's hoofs as though somewhat was the matter.

"What is it, Master Trenoweth?" I asked.

"Come and help me, if it pleases you," replied the Cornishman; "we can soon overtake these good masters again, and enjoy more of their pleasant society."

I therefore dismounted, and came close to John Trenoweth, who was examining the horse's hoofs carefully, but with which, I could not for the life of me see that aught ailed.

"The hoofs are all right," I said.

"Aye, and the horse is all right," he said in a low voice; "but I trust not those men, Master Rupert. They speak too freely, and give too many confidences on so short acquaintance. A still tongue makes a wise head, young master. Let us hear all, and say nothing. And for my own part, I be right vexed that you did speak my name aloud in their hearing, for Master Killigrew is well known, and John Trenoweth hath been spoken of as one who shares his confidences. Take my advice, Master Rupert—mention no man's name, and tell no one whither we be bound."

And with these words John Trenoweth, after having made a great ado about his horse's hoofs, and using his knife as if to prise a stone which might have been jammed between the shoe and the hoof, he presently mounted again, upon which we rode on and overtook our companions.

But little was said during the remainder of our journey to Willacombe, although Master Nicholas Seyton and Master Francis Belmont continued to regard us with a friendly air, and spoke of our enjoying our good sack together in the "Virgin Queen."

No sooner did we arrive at the inn than I saw at a glance that Toadsby, the innkeeper, was on good terms with my companions. He received them with great respect, and assured both them and us that a good meal should be presently forthcoming. In this he kept his promise, for in a very short time a smoking haunch of beef was on the table, the which, being hungry, we fell to right heartily. After the meal we were joined by several of the villagers, whose tongues were speedily unloosed by the sack and ale which they consumed.

I may here say that, although at the time I little liked John Trenoweth's caution, fancying myself more capable than he of knowing how much to say to one's fellow-travellers, I nevertheless took his advice to heart, so that no word did I let fall concerning who I was or for what purpose we were travelling westward. As a consequence, I was but little prepared for what followed, for we had been but a little time over our wine, when the innkeeper, Thomas Toadsby, came in and spoke to Master Nicholas Seyton in

a low voice. Immediately Toadsby had spoken, Seyton fastened his eyes upon me, and directly after rose up as if in great anger.

"Aye, my masters," he cried aloud, "I thought not when these men overtook us to-day, that I was speaking to an enemy of our Queen and country."

"What mean you?" cried several.

"This," replied Seyton. "I have my suspicions that these two men here are Jesuits in disguise, and that they are bent upon a mission which means danger to our country. Such a thought came into my head when they stopped on the road in order to have converse together, but I quickly drove it away, as being insulting to men of honour, as I hoped they were. But I have received information that this is one Rupert Hamstead, son of Sir Richard Hamstead, of Hamstead Manor, who is well known to be a Catholic and a secret enemy of our Queen."

"It is a lie," I said, angrily, placing my hand on my sword-hilt.

"As to that we shall see right quickly," said Master Seyton. "Meanwhile, be assured that we will not be bullied out of our duty. Besides, what is a lie? Are you, or are you not, the son of Sir Richard Hamstead?"

"I am," I cried hotly, "and he who says Sir Richard Hamstead is not a loyal gentleman is a liar, and I will drive his lies down his throat with my sword-hilt!"

"Ah, my masters," said the man Seyton in a tone of triumph, "he confesses that he is the son of Sir Richard Hamstead, and Sir Richard is a Catholic."

"But no Jesuit!" I cried. "He hates them."

"Of that after, of that after!" said Seyton, repeating his words twice, as though he wanted to impress them upon the minds of the villagers, who by this time were all agog. "He admits that his father is a Catholic. And now another question, worthy gentlemen. Can Master Rupert Hamstead prove to us, the trusted servants of the Queen, and possessing a warrant to arrest all Jesuits, can he prove to us that the journey he is now taking is not to carry out some plot of the Catholics?"

"Aye, I can," I replied, "but I will give no answer to such as you!

"Hear him, my masters!" said Seyton; "hear him! He will give me no answer. Can he deny that he projects a journey to Spain?"

At this I was silent, wondering greatly why they should be led to ask such a question, until I remembered that I thought I saw them smile when I partly combated their

statement that no English Protestant dared to put his foot on Spanish soil.

"He doth not speak, my masters, he doth not speak, and this augurs badly for him. And yet I would be just. I am not a harsh man, neither would I drag a man before the justices without sufficient reason. All the same, I must do my duty. If this young man, Master Rupert Hamstead, and his fellow-traveller will give good account of themselves, I will let them go: if not, then, my masters, I call upon you to stand by me while I arrest these men in the Queen's name."

In truth, the affair began to look serious, and I began to reflect as to the course I should take.

"Answer this first," said Seyton. "Is it your purpose to go to Spain?"

I was angry at the man's persistence, and, without heeding my words, I cried out hotly, "And what if it is? It is no affair of yours."

"This augurs badly," said the man Seyton, "very badly. And for this reason: no English Protestant's life is safe in Spain, and no Englishman goes thither unless in league with the Jesuits. Moreover, his father is a Catholic. Doubtless, moreover, this fellow here is also associated with a Catholic. His name is Trenoweth—that I know. Trenoweth is a Cornish name, and although the county is right loyal as a whole, yet there be many traitors there."

"I will tell you who I be," said Trenoweth. "I be the steward of Master Killigrew, a trusted counsellor of our Queen. Aye, and more: Master Killigrew was called a rebel in Mary's time, because he would not fall in with her Papist devices, and for that reason he had to fly to France, where he remained until Mary's death. What think you of that, you treason hunters! I am a Protestant, and I hate all Popery. 'Down with it!' I say."

At this Thomas Toadsby's ostler came into the room, and whispered something in Seyton's ear, who exchanged a meaning glance with his friend. Whereupon both of them rose, Seyton saying, "This seems better, but keep them both safe for a few minutes. We are called away now, but we will return presently, and go into this matter more fully."

With this they left the room, while the villagers looked at each other, as if to question what they should do next.

"This be mighty strange behaviour, my masters," said a stout yeoman presently. "These two men have accused these two travellers of being Jesuits, they have given it out that they mean to arrest them, and then they have both left as though they were afraid of something themselves."

"Aye, but they be afraid of nothing," said another, "for they be in favour at Court, and hold her Majesty's commission."

"So they say, but I would like their warrants to be examined by some learned clerk. I would, in truth."

"Aye, but Master Thomas Toadsby hath seen their warrant."

"Then let us speak with Thomas Toadsby. True, he keeps good sack, but I love not his ways. Anything under Henry, Protestant under Edward, Catholic under Mary, and Protestant again under her gracious Majesty. Such turncoats please me not. But what say you, my masters? Be you Jesuits?"

"Jesuits!" I cried hotly. "I have sailed with Sir Francis Drake and Sir Richard Grenville. I am a friend of Sir Walter Raleigh, and have been trusted by Lord Howard. See, I have a letter in my pouch written by Sir Walter Raleigh himself. Look at it yourself." The stout yeoman gazed at it steadily, although I doubt much if he could read a single word.

"Aye, it is written by Sir Walter Raleigh himself," he said admiringly. "Another cup of sack to our noble travellers, and may the foul fiend take those marplots!"

At this my heart sunk, strange as it may seem, for a thought came into my mind which troubled me sorely. And this thought was immediately confirmed, for at that very moment there was the sound of horses' hoofs, and three men came into the room.

"What seek you, my masters?" asked Toadsby tremulously, I thought.

"Seek!" replied one of the new-comers, "we seek two Jesuits who be masquerading as servants of the Queen. They have been long going around saying they have a warrant to arrest all those who be plotting against her Majesty, and all the time they be plotting Jesuits in disguise. They be working under orders from Father Parsons, yet in the guise of the Queen's trusted servants they be working against her, and they be seeking to find out the plans of loyal Englishmen by parading their false pretences."

"Their names?" I cried eagerly.

"They call themselves Master Nicholas Seyton and Master Francis Belmont," he replied, "but in reality they be two Jesuit priests. Hast seen them, young master?"

"They left less than half an hour ago," I cried, "after charging me with treason."

"Ah! say you so? Tell us more, young master."

CHAPTER V

HOW I FIRST MET MAWGAN KILLIGREW

AS may be easily comprehended, I was not long in telling my story, and no sooner did I finish than the newcomers started for the stable with great haste, but found both men and horses gone.

"Where is Toadsby?" cried the leader of the party, who afterwards told us he was called Henry Blount.

"Here," said the innkeeper tremulously.

"Where be these men gone?" cried Blount.

"Nay, I know not, my masters, except that they had wind of an affair of importance which they must presently see into. I told them they had already an affair with these worthy masters here; but they heeded me not, but rode away as though the furies were at their heels."

"Have a care, Thomas Toadsby," said Blount, "have a care. For a long time thou hast been suspected of foul play."

"But, my masters, I swear by the Mass—by that I mean the holy Gospel, and may I be forgiven for using such a Papist heathen term!—that I am a true man."

"Thou art a false, lying varlet," cried Blount, "and unless thou dost mend thy ways thou shalt lie in Fleet Prison, and in the same dirty cells to which thy old friend Stephen Gardiner committed honest men in Mary's time. Thy account is getting longer and longer, and proofs of thy falseness are coming in apace."

"Nay, Master Blount, I am an honest innkeeper. It is true I turned Catholic in Mary's time, because I was not fully instructed in the true faith; but since our gracious Virgin Queen ascended the throne, through the sermons of the Reverend Josiah Moggram, I have seen the error of my ways. And, in truth, I believe you do judge those worthy gentlemen harshly. They have been here before, and I know them to be good Protestants, hating all things Popish right heartily."

At this one of Blount's companions entered the stable, carrying a package which had been fastened to the saddlebags of Master Belmont.

"What have you there?" asked Blount, "and where got you it?"

"As to where I got it," replied the other, "I can tell right easily. I got it from the room where these Jesuits arranged to spend the night. I discovered Toadsby's wife in the act of hiding it. As to what it contains, I know not, for I brought it to you straightway."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Blount a minute later, "here is another whip for your back, Thomas Toadsby. Look! here is no less than the robes of a Jesuit priest! These be your loyal gentlemen—eh, Thomas Toadsby? Here be the Papist things that your wife was trying to hide—and she a listener to the Reverend Josiah Moggram!"

"Nay, my masters, I grieve to say it; but my wife sees not with me in this matter. I much fear me she is still afraid of the hell fires which the priests try and frighten women with. And it may be they have persuaded her, or commanded her, to do that which I should condemn most heartily."

"I believe that thou art a liar, Thomas Toadsby," said Blount, "but while we parley they escape. Tipston and Shepstone, do you ride after them. There is but one road that they can have gone, and it may be you can catch them. As for me, I will make further inquiries here, especially of these two worshipful gentlemen who have suffered at their hands."

At this Blount led the way back to the inn, evidently anxious to get to his sack, and glad to have an excuse for sending his two companions on what seemed to me a hopeless task. For, as all the world knows, although the feeling was becoming stronger and stronger against the Catholics, largely because the Pope had encouraged Philip of Spain to come to England and drive the Queen from her throne, there were many Catholics throughout the country. At this time, moreover, it was difficult to tell who was who. Many there were who, while professing the Reformed faith outwardly, were Catholics at heart, and needed only the visit of a priest to lead them to plan for the reconversion of England to the old faith. Many there were, especially among women, who dared not disobey the priest's command, and as a consequence men like Campion, and Throgmorton, and Bentley had again and again been hidden in houses that were supposed to be owned by believers in the Reformed faith. In truth, it often happened that, while the husbands and brothers had given up all connection with Rome, their wives and sisters were still in league with the Jesuits.

This being so, I knew that Seyton and Belmont would have no difficulty in finding hiding-places, and I felt sure

that Tipston and Shepstone would presently return saying they could find no track of them anywhere. In this, moreover, my surmises were correct, at the which Blount seemed by no means surprised, and, if the truth must be told, not over-much concerned.

"But we will find them, Master Hamstead," he said again and again, "and we will bring Thomas Toadsby to book in the bargain."

We sat up late that night, Master Blount asking me many questions, to which I answered warily, telling him nothing that I did not wish the world to know, yet enough to satisfy his curiosity. He, on the other hand, gave me much news. He told me that three Jesuits had been put to torture, with the result that they had confessed to a plot to murder the Queen, having been led to believe that they would thereby be serving God and saving the country. Others there were, however, who declared that they made these confessions, not because they were true, but because they hoped to escape punishment. He told me, moreover, that many believed the great Armada had already sailed, and might be expected on English seas any day; while some had it that the moment the Spaniards put their feet on our shores, half the nation would fight under Philip's banner. But that, he said, he did not believe, because everywhere the best families in England—some of them Catholics—were not only providing men, but vessels, in order to be ready to fight the Spaniards on sea, and so prevent them from landing.

"Ah, but we shall have hard times soon, Master Hamstead!" he said.

"Why think you so?" I asked.

"Because our gracious Queen will not believe the danger. She will grant neither men nor money, and so Lord Howard and Sir Richard Grenville, although they be loyal Englishmen, feel sore at heart at being so cramped. And it is hard for such men as they, not only to have to provide men, but to victual them. Aye, and it is harder to think that, should the Armada come, we have neither powder nor cannon balls to fight them!"

"And what think you can be done, Master Blount?"

"This, Master Hamstead. Our Queen ought to have laid before her the strength of the fleet the King of Spain proposes sending. And more: absolute proofs will have to be laid before her that he is really coming."

At this I thought of the mission upon which I was engaged; but I said nothing to Blount, because I did not judge him to be wise of head, and because my experiences that day had made me wary.

The following morning we were early in the saddle, and so we did not see Master Blount again. In truth, as I passed his chamber door, I heard him snoring with great vigour, like a man who had yet hours of sleep before him.

"You seem thoughtful, Master Rupert," said John Trenoweth after we had travelled some while.

"That am I," I replied, "and more than thoughtful: I am sad at heart."

"And why, if I make so bold as to ask?"

"I fear me much, John Trenoweth, that yesterday's doings augur ill for us."

"And why?"

"Because I believe Seyton and Belmont planned our meeting. I believe they had suspicion of our designs, and so used means to find them out."

"But how could they?"

"Nay, I know not how their suspicions came. Perchance you dropped some idle word while on your way to my father's house. Perchance Master Killigrew's plans have been spoken about in Falmouth; but of this I know not. This we know: these two men are now aware of our plans."

"But we told them nothing."

"Aye, but we did. They have now a shrewd idea that we are bound for Spain, and they will warn such of their friends as they desire of our purpose in going thither."

"I do not believe it," said John Trenoweth stoutly, "for, in truth, we told them nothing worth the telling."

"We told them much, I tell you. I, like a fool, admitted that I was bound for Spain, while thou didst openly parade the fact that thou wert the dependent of Master Killigrew. Think you that these men do not know how to put two and two together? Why, man, they spend their lives in finding out secrets, and thus will have means of information unknown to us. But it cannot be helped now. What is spoken is spoken. Aye, but they be clever fellows!"

"Not so clever but that they will be dragged to justice," replied John Trenoweth.

"Nay, I know not. It was a bold game they played, worthy of Father Parsons himself. Why, think you, man, they laid their plans so carefully that we could scarce do other than divulge what was in our minds."

"I pray God we may meet them again," said John Trenoweth fervently.

"I fear me, if we meet them again, it will not be on

English soil," I replied. "If we meet them again, it wil be in a country where honest men have to hide their heads, and where English Protestants be burned like dry fuel."

As may be imagined, we kept a sharp look-out for enemies all the rest of our journey; but naught happened to us worth the mentioning, and presently, after we had been towed across the Tamar, and rode through the town of Saltash, I felt that I must soon be able to place a plan before Master Killigrew and Sir John Tremayne that should show them that I was worthy of the confidence they placed in me.

I also fell to wondering what kind of a man Mawgan Killigrew might be, and how he might regard the idea of accepting me as the leader of our expedition; but this did not trouble me much, for although John Trenoweth did not speak freely about the young master, I gathered that he was good-natured and lovable. Not, perhaps, over-quick of brain, but kind and faithful, never having been known to go back upon his word.

"And he is not likely to fail at a pinch?" I asked.

"A Killigrew fail at a pinch!" he replied. "Such a thing was never known—that is, with the Killigrews of Arwenack. They have ever been a wild race, sea-rovers, fighters, hard drinkers, and the like; but not one has ever been known to play false to a brother in arms. Aye, but thou wilt never have to regret having a Killigrew as a comrade. Faithless with women I much fear me some of them have been, but with men, never!"

"Faithless with women!" I said.

"Aye, some of them have been sad dogs; not in the way you think, but—well, I will not speak of them more."

"And hath Mawgan a good name among the Falmouth people?"

"Aye, that he hath. Neither man nor maid hath an evil word for him. From stable-boy to lord, and from serving-maid to high-born lady, all love Master Mawgan."

"And hath he had love affairs, Master Trenoweth?" I asked, curiously, for I much desired to be acquainted of his ways.

"Nay," replied the Cornishman. "I never knew Master Mawgan heave a sigh for any woman. Dogs he loves, horses he loves, and a good fight he delighteth in; but love for women doth not seem to come into his heart. In that matter you and he be alike, Master Rupert."

"As to that," I replied, "I have many times vowed that, until I meet a maid as fair and as good as my mother, love for women cannot enter my heart; and my friend

Walter Raleigh hath it that, if I abide by my vow, I shall remain loveless all my days."

"For me," said John Trenoweth, "there is only one woman. Esther Truscott is the maid I loved twenty years agone, and she is still the only maid in the world to me. I wonder where she is now? God grant that—— But let us hurry on, Master Hamstead. There is no time to waste!"

At these words a fierce look came into his eyes, his teeth became set, while he dashed his heels into his horse's sides in a way that made me think he had taken leave of his senses.

I well remember the time we drew near to Truro town. We had been in our saddles all day, and both men and horses were as dead tired as hard riding could make them.

"Is there a good inn here, John Trenoweth?" I asked.

"A good inn? Aye, there be good inns in plenty," said the Cornishman. "Think you, in coming to my native county, you be coming to a heathen land? But we have naught to do with inns."

"Naught to do with inns?" I repeated.

"Nay," he replied. "Why, man, we be only fourteen miles from Falmouth town, and but fifteen from Arwenack House."

"Aye, but it is seven o'clock at night," I replied, "and we have been in the saddle since early morn, and our horses be dead tired."

"And what of that? The horses can rest a week—a month. I tell you, Master Rupert, we go straight on, save to give the horses a drink of barley and water and take a mug of ale ourselves."

"But I be dead tired, man, and feel as though I can sleep in the saddle!"

"Then sleep in thy saddle, most worthy friend of Walter Raleigh," said John Trenoweth, "and methinks the men you profess to have served, and boast so much about, were well rid of you. The man who is but fifteen miles from his journey's end, and yet will break that journey at an inn, is but poor stuff."

"Much more of that, and I will lay my riding switch across your back, John Trenoweth," I said, angrily.

"Lay it on," said the Cornishman, with a laugh, "lay it on; but I doubt me if I could feel it. The man who is too tired to ride from Truro to Falmouth has but little strength to spare; while he who whines like a sick baby because he hath been in his saddle for twelve hours will be but a poor leader to——"

I did not let him finish his sentence, for, angered by his

taunt, I drew my horse close to his, and struck him a cuff in the head with my fist.

"That for the strength of my arm, John Trenoweth," I said, "and if you dare speak in such a manner again I will thrash you like a stable-boy."

At this he jumped from his horse, and before I knew what he thought of doing he had dragged me to my feet, and then fell to trying to shake me, as a terrier might shake a rat.

At this we fell to wrestling, and soon I found that in point of strength John Trenoweth was my equal, if not my master. And while he could not throw me, I, on the other hand, could no more move him than if he had been an oak-tree.

We were, as I have said, near to Truro town—about two miles away, in truth, close by the village of Tresillian, and at the very gates of Tregothnan, the famous home of the Boscawens. The evening was perfectly still and clear, and just before my harangue with John Trenoweth I had noticed the beauty of wooded hill and flowery dell, together with the broad stretch of water that nestled between the hills.

"Strike me, wud 'ee!" said John Trenoweth, lapsing into the Cornish vernacular. "Oh, you be but a droozle head, you be, a poor, soft-armed boobah that bean't vit to provide mait for a dree-days-ould yaw' kitten," and then he fell to, heaving at me madly. "Where sh'll I put 'ee?" he continued to grunt. "In the revver! No, I wa'ant dirty the watter by that. Shall I taake 'ee to Fammuth town? Oh, that the Loard shud 'a made such baisly traade!" And again he tried to drag me around the road until I felt sure he must be mad.

At this I began to devise means whereby I might break free from his grasp (for I could do nothing while he held me fast), after which I felt sure I could bring him to his senses. In this, however, I was unsuccessful. He held me with a grip of iron, and continued to try and drag me around the road, grunting and talking all the time.

"Holloa! what's up here?" said a loud, cheery voice.

"Doan't 'ee interfere for a minit or two more, Maaster Mawgan," said Trenoweth; "'tes nearly gone now. There, tha's yer soarts," and then suddenly he gave me a great heave which sent me staggering across the road, after which he quietly walked towards his horse.

"What! John Trenoweth, again!" said the newcomer.

"Yes, Master Mawgan," said Trenoweth in a perfectly

quiet and calm tone. "For four days I have travelled with Master Rupert Hamstead, and up to now have found it impossible to quarrel with him. As a consequence I was nearly mad with my thoughts and my memories. But 'tis over now. All the same, I did not expect to see you here, Master Mawgan."

"Aye, but I could not stay at home another hour. For three days I have fretted and fumed, and this afternoon I could bear it no longer. I fancied you must be drawing near, so I determined to start out to meet you. Is this Master Rupert Hamstead?"

"Aye, that it is, and this, Master Rupert, is my young master, Mawgan Killigrew."

I had by this time been able to have a good look at my future companion, and, without knowing why, my heart went out towards him with a great love. The ring of his voice was so true, and the look on his face so pleasant, for this I was able to see by the evening light, that I wanted nothing more to tell me that he and I would stand true to each other.

"Ah, Master Hamstead," he said, "I little wot I should meet you in this fashion. And yet I be not surprised. In truth, I wonder he hath held up so long without seeking a quarrel, but of that more later. You have had a long day, so perchance we had better stay at Truro to-night."

"I am tired no longer," I replied, "for my quarrel with John Trenoweth hath been to me as good as a night in bed. Therefore, let us haste with all speed."

"Right willingly," said Mawgan Killigrew, "for, truth to tell, I believe neither my father nor Sir John Tremayne will go to bed until you come. Much hath happened since John Trenoweth left us, so much that it will be necessary for us to use all speed. But enough of that now. This is neither the time nor place to talk of such things. So let us mount, and away."

Suiting the action to the word, he sprang on his horse, while John Trenoweth and I followed his example, and a little later were climbing the hill which lay between us and Truro town.

CHAPTER VI

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A SPANISH PROVERB

MY father had more than once spoken to me of the beauties of Cornwall, and as I rode through Truro and afterwards along the road towards Falmouth I did not wonder at it. Often as had I boasted of the lovely country which surrounded my home, I had to admit without parley that nothing in the county of Hertford could compare with the valley of the Fal. In truth, as once on our journey we stood on a hill which commanded a view of the river and of the wooded slopes around, I fairly heaved a sigh of wonder, so lovely was the scene. As we rode along, moreover, a party of boatmen rowed towards Malpas, and as they rowed they sang one of those simple airs for which Cornwall is so famous, and which to me sounded beautiful beyond words.

"No wonder you Cornish people are proud of your country, Master Killigrew," I said to the young fellow who rode by my side. "The very air seems to breathe romance and beauty."

"Aye, but wait until you have seen Falmouth harbour," laughed Mawgan Killigrew. "All the same, I shall be glad to get away from it, for, as true as I am a living man, I would rather be in Spain with a price set upon my head than here in Cornwall."

"And why?" I asked.

"Why? Because I long for action. I am almost as bad as John Trenoweth here, in my desire for a fight. Besides, I have been sorely vexed."

I looked at him questioningly.

"I may as well tell you at once," said Mawgan, "for you will be sure to know sooner or later. In truth, I believe you will be as vexed as I when you know everything."

"Why, what has happened?" I asked.

"It seems as though we shall not have to go to Spain at all."

"What!" I said aghast.

"Aye, I fear me it is true, and that is why I am so vexed. Both my father and Sir John Tremayne seem to be convinced about the matter, and in spite of all my protests I cannot alter them."

"But why have they changed?"

"Oh, it is this Spanish Protestant who hath changed them. He comes from Toledo, and has gained the confidence of everyone."

"A Spanish Protestant from Toledo!" I repeated.

"Aye, so he claims to be."

"His name?" I cried, thinking of my father's arch-enemy.

"Señor Gomez," he replied. "He hath also brought with him his daughter, who hath turned the head of everyone. Moreover, he tells my father that Señora Valencia and Esther Truscott have embraced the Catholic faith."

I must confess that for the moment the news struck me dumb. If this were the case, a great part of our reason for going to Spain was, indeed, taken away, and all the plans I had made would be useless. But although I spoke no word, John Trenoweth, who had been riding silently, acted not so tamely.

"What say you, Master Mawgan?" he cried. "My Esther turned Papist!"

"So saith Señor Gomez," replied Killigrew.

"Then Señor Gomez is a liar!" he cried. "I tell you I know Esther better than that. I know that for years I doubted her, and in my heart I cursed her, for the which God hath punished me. But that is over now. For months I have been thinking it all over, and I tell you, whatever may have happened to Señora Valencia, as she is called now, my Esther could no more become a Papist than she could become a Jew!"

"But he hath papers which he brought from Toledo proving the thing," cried Mawgan Killigrew.

"Then the papers lie!" cried John Trenoweth. "And I tell you this: if you will not go with me, I will go alone. If Señor Gomez hath befooled you, he shall not befool me! My Esther a Papist! Nay, she may be burned—that I can believe; but a Papist, no! Don't you believe it, Master Mawgan."

"Wait until you've seen Señor Gomez," said Mawgan Killigrew. "At first I felt as you do, but I feel he hath told the truth. It is not as though he doth not hate the Catholics; he doth, and that right heartily. You should see the marks on his body, John—marks of the way the Papists have tortured him! It was this that drew my father and Sir John Tremayne to him. I tell you the man hath suffered agonies. Besides, he was at Toledo when Señora Valencia and Esther Truscott were brought before the judges."

"And do you mean to tell me that he heard my Esther renounce her faith in the Reformed doctrines? I tell you it is a lie, Master Mawgan!"

"As to that, John, he saith that Señora Valencia's daughter, Isabella, so pleaded with her mother that she could not resist her, and when her mistress had recanted Esther declared that she could not go against her mistress. She said she had left her home and her sweetheart for her mistress, she had lived more than twenty years in Spain for her, and that, although she knew nothing about Popish belief, she would follow her mistress in this also."

This seemed to strike terror into the heart of John Trenoweth, for he reeled in his saddle like a drunken man. But he quickly mastered himself.

"I tell you this Spaniard is a liar!" he cried.

"He hath letters from a man of God in Spain," said Mawgan Killigrew, "one who, in spite of persecution, holds to the true faith, and who, in secret, instructs many in sound doctrine."

"A lie, I tell you!" said John, and then he stopped his horse in the road, while we, wondering also, stopped ours and looked at him.

We had now reached the top of a hill, and, the road there being hedgeless, the full moon shone upon his upturned face.

"I call upon God to witness that all this is a lie!" he said, solemnly. "Ask me to prove it, and I cannot; ask me to give reasons, and I cannot; but it is a lie. If I saw a confession written by Esther herself, I would say it is a lie; if good Dr. Ridley were to rise from the dead, and say it was true, I would tell him he had been instructed by the devil. How do I know this? I cannot say, except that God hath spoken to me! Esther is alive! Look, man, look! I see her now. She is beckoning to me, she is telling me to come to her aid! I am coming, Esther! I am coming!"

And these words he spoke as though he were an inspired prophet. He did not talk like a demented man, neither was his visage fierce. It was calm and dignified, and so solemn was his voice that neither Mawgan Killigrew nor myself could speak a word.

"Listen, young masters," he went on; "this is a trick of the devil. Señor Gomez I have not seen, but he is an enemy of the true faith. His daughter may appear as an angel of light, but she is a child of darkness. When you listen to them, bear this in mind. Go to Spain we must, for God hath need of us there. I can see Esther now,

beckoning to me. Others are around her pleading for deliverance. It is the call of God ! "

We stood watching him, his face lit up by the rays of the moon, and his eyes gleaming with a strange light. For a time he seemed communing with things unseen, then slowly his form unbent, the light went out of his eyes, and his face assumed the mild, good-humoured expression which characterised him.

" Let us ride on," he said quietly.

" Saw you him ever like this before ? " I asked Mawgan Killigrew in a whisper.

" Never."

" Think you—that—that——"

" His mother was supposed to see visions years ago," interrupted Mawgan, as though he knew what was in my mind.

" Saw you anything suspicious in this Señor Gomez ? "

" Nothing. He convinced me in spite of myself ; while his daughter, the señorita, looks as beautiful as a goddess, and as pure as an angel."

" Hath she moved your heart ? " I asked.

Mawgan Killigrew was silent for a time ; then he said slowly, " I do not know ; but when she speaks I forget everything save her goodness and her beauty."

" What is she like ? " I asked.

" She is not tall, but very comely. Her hair and eyes are as black as a raven's wing ; her skin is dark, but clear and beautiful, as if God determined to be prodigal in His gifts. Her lips are full and red, her voice is like music. Besides, while her eyes seem to flash fire, they shine with the light of tenderness and purity. She comes of an old Spanish family, and—and——"

" You have fallen in love with her ? "

" No, no, and yet I would kill the man who sought to win her for his wife."

" Look, Master Mawgan Killigrew," I said. " I have seen neither Señor Gomez nor his daughter. I have heard of them to-night for the first time. John Trenoweth came to my father's house less than a week ago, and told the story that you know of, and so much did he move all our hearts with his story that I am come here to do his bidding. On my way hither I have been made aware that the Jesuits have got wind of our plans. Proof of that I will give you presently. Señor Gomez may be all he pretends to be, while his daughter may be as pure as the mother of Christ ; but it doth seem strange that they should visit your father's house at such a moment, and to persuade you all that to go to

Spain is useless and dangerous. However, I urge nothing now, save this : let us be watchful. Let us be harmless as doves, and let us be wise as serpents. Let us listen to all they say, but let us keep our heads. I have met the Spaniards before, and know something of their ways, and this I have always found wise : let us hear all they say, but tell them nothing. For me, I go to your father's house bearing in mind what John Trenoweth hath just said."

To this Mawgan Killigrew said not a word, and we rode on for some minutes in silence.

"I suppose I shall see this Señor Gomez to-morrow ?" I remarked, presently.

"Possibly to-night," replied Mawgan Killigrew.

"To-night ?" I repeated.

"Aye, to-night, for both he and the señorita are supping at Arwenack. Sir John Tremayne hath also promised to join the party."

"Strange that you could have left them, especially as the señorita is to be one of the guests."

"I was strongly tempted to remain at home," replied Mawgan quietly, "but something urged me to come and meet you. I felt sure you would be drawing near, for John Trenoweth had arranged exactly what he meant to do before he went away. He told us that, whether you consented to come with him or no, he meant to be at Arwenack to-night, and so I, my mind all filled with conflicting thoughts, felt myself unable to resist the temptation to come and meet you. I wanted to see what kind of a man you were, and, although I could not explain why, to tell you of this Protestant Spaniard and his daughter."

"Hath your father or Sir John Tremayne told them aught of me ?" I asked.

"No, nothing. It was at my request he refrained. Why I asked him to say nothing about you I cannot tell, save that, in spite of the fact that I have become convinced that they are what they profess to be, I have been filled with many forebodings."

"What kind of forebodings ?"

"Even that I cannot tell. They are vague, and in a sense unreal, and yet, while I cannot think of doubting either Señor Gomez or his daughter, I longed for your coming. Look, yonder is Arwenack ; we shall be there in a few minutes."

We had no sooner arrived at the home of the Killigrews than Master Killigrew asked that I should be admitted into his presence without delay. As a consequence I found myself in a room full of people before I had time to remove

my dusty, travel-stained clothes for the finer apparel I had brought with me. But this fact I soon forgot in the warmth of Master Killigrew's greeting.

"Right welcome, Rupert!" he cried. "Welcome for thine own sake, as well as thy father's. Ah! Dick Hamstead and I had many a strange experience at Rouen before thou wert born, aye, and thy grandfather, Godfrey Bedford, hath fought by my side, hard and long, in the old dark days. Thou art like thy father, Rupert. Dick Hamstead lives in thee, and, for that matter, so doth Godfrey Bedford. Good blood, my boy, good blood. A mixture of the Hamstead and the Bedford, and there is none better in England—no, none better."

This he said while shaking hands, and looking at me from head to foot.

"Thou art as big as thy father, too," he went on. "Saints alive! what arms and legs thou hast! Well, our beloved Queen will need them, for although that for which——" Here he stopped, and paused awkwardly, and then I noticed that Mawgan Killigrew had put his foot on his father's. "That is," he continued presently, "the Spaniards will soon be coming, and, as I mean to provide a ship out of my own purse and likewise man her, well, there be great need for a strapping lad like thee, Rupert. But I am forgetting myself. Here is my old friend Sir John Tremayne, of whom you have doubtless heard; and here is Master Roger Carew, as true a Cornishman as ever lived south of the Tamar and north of Land's End; and here is Sir Humphrey Bolitho, who is renowned for many things; aye, and here is Señor Gomez, a man of God, if ever there was one, who hath brought sad news from Spain. As for the women folk, thou shalt see them presently, when thou hast had time to make thyself clean, and to rig thyself out in fine attire."

During the time Master Killigrew had continued speaking, I had spoken to each of the persons he had mentioned. Sir John Tremayne looked old and worn and sad. Still, he carried himself with that air of dignity and reserve power which is peculiar to old men who can boast of noble blood. Master Roger Carew and Sir Humphrey Bolitho did not interest me so much, but perhaps that was because I was eager to give my best attention to Señor Gomez. And this, as may be imagined, I did right speedily, but with little result. He was a tall, stately man of from, perhaps, forty-five to fifty years of age. On his face were marks of suffering—at least, so I thought—and in his eyes was an expression which haunted me.

"Señor Rupert Hamstead," he said slowly. "Ah! I, too, have heard of your father. A brave man, and a strong, who lived in a troublous time. Ah! I grieve to say it, men never go to Spain for liberty, although Spaniards like myself come to England. Your father went to France for safety, but never to Spain—never to Spain!"

For my own part, I could hardly see what he was driving at; but true to my resolution, I said naught, hoping that by being a careful listener, and keeping a ready wit, I might hear something that might advantage me.

Presently, after having donned my finery, and supped to my great satisfaction, I again found myself in the company of the men of whom I have spoken. Much talk was engaged in, and many opinions were uttered concerning the future of Spain and England, but, nothing being said that I could take exception to, or that was of great interest to me, I had great difficulty in suppressing the yawns that, unbidden, came to my mouth.

Perhaps Señor Gomez saw this, for I presently heard him say, "Your company gives me great joy, Master Killigrew, but mine host at the 'Queen's Head' will not thank me for keeping him so late from his bed. I will therefore acquaint my daughter that it is time for us to depart."

"I will walk with you, señor," said Mawgan Killigrew, looking towards me.

"And I also, if I may," I said.

"Your kindness overwhelms me," said the Spaniard. "Nevertheless, I am scarcely surprised. For is not the English heart always generous? Is not the Englishman's hand ever ready to bestow help?"

These words came glibly enough, and, but for what John Trenoweth had said, I should have paid no particular heed to them, but remembering the Spaniards I had met, and calling to mind their great ignorance of our language, I could not help asking myself how he had learnt to speak so fluently. This thought had scarcely passed through my mind, however, than it became as nothing to me, for I stood face to face with Señorita Gomez.

As I have said before, I had been in the habit of comparing every woman with my mother, and that in every case all had fallen so far short of her in beauty and goodness that I had always been led to regard them as of little importance. But here was a woman who, at first sight, seemed to me as beautiful as my own mother. Not that she in any way reminded me of her. For my mother's was purely an English face, and had no suggestion of aught foreign, while Señorita Gomez was a pure Spaniard. Perhaps it was owing to

the fact that she presented such a complete contrast to my mother that I was willing to admit her beauty. Not that she was tall or stately. Rather she was not above the average height of an Englishwoman, while the very fullness of her figure suggested that in a few years she might have that floridness so common to Spanish women after they are thirty years of age. At present, however, not even a Greek sculptor could have found fault with her. Her complexion, while dark, was clear and brilliant; her features were, I thought, perfectly moulded; while her eyes possessed a fascination and a power which I had never before thought possible. For a moment she charmed me, as a serpent charms a bird, and at that time I cared but little either about the fate of Señora Valencia or the coming of the Armada. When she spoke, moreover, her voice was honeyed and persuasive, and, for what reason I knew not, she suggested in flattering terms that she had heard of my deeds of bravery.

I noticed that Mawgan Killigrew hung his head as I walked by her side towards the inn, and as the maid smiled sweetly upon me I could not help remembering that he said he would kill the man who sought her for his bride.

Still, little was said that could arouse him to anger, for after we had passed outside Arwenack gates we spoke only of the sufferings of the few who in Spain believed in the Reformed faith, and of her grief that Señora Valencia should have yielded to the threats of the Inquisitors.

"And you—have you suffered, señorita?" I asked, after she had spoken of these doings.

"Ah! you little know, señor," she made answer.

"And what was said to you when you made confession that the Mass was only idolatry?" I asked, for there was something in her conversation which made me ask the question, although at the time I could not explain it.

At this she gave a start, and looked earnestly towards her father, who was walking silently by her left side.

"*En casa del moro no hables algaravia,*" said Señor Gomez, like a man musing.

"What is that you are saying?" said the señorita, like one who felt it her duty to attend to her father rather than to a stranger.

He gave a start like a man aroused from a dream.

"Ah! my child, my mind was far away," he said. "What were you saying?"

And then some other subject seemed naturally to claim her attention, for the persecution of those who believed in the Reformed faith was not mentioned again during our walk to the inn where they were staying. Nevertheless,

the look in her eyes, and the words her father had spoken, set me wondering greatly. Evidently he did not think that I knew aught of the Spanish tongue, or, even if I did, would fancy that I should see no meaning in the words he had uttered. And yet I thought I saw his meaning, for what he said was an old Spanish proverb, which, being rendered into English, simply meant this : "*Do not speak Arabic in a Moor's house.*"

CHAPTER VII

WHY MAWGAN KILLIGREW AND I HASTED TO LEAVE ENGLAND

"MAWGAN KILLIGREW, we must go to Spain," I said, as presently we walked back to Arwenack together.

"It seems to me, you would rather stay in Falmouth," said Mawgan, a little moodily, I thought.

"You say that neither Señor Gomez nor his daughter know aught of me?" I said.

"No," he replied in the same tone.

"Mawgan," I said, "it is expedient that both you and I keep out of the señorita's way."

"What mean you?" he asked sharply.

"I mean it is dangerous to both of us. First of all, you and I must be friends, and, if we are much with her, we shall grow jealous of each other."

He nodded his head quietly.

"Moreover, she will make fools of us both."

"How?"

"She will make us open our mouths when we should keep them shut."

He nodded his head again; then, after a few seconds' silence, he said:

"And why, Master Rupert Hamstead?"

"For one thing, I believe that neither she nor her father is of our faith."

"Nay, man, there you are wrong. I myself have seen the proofs that they are."

"What proofs?"

"The parchments, attested by the faithful in Toledo."

"Who are the faithful in Toledo, Master Mawgan Killigrew? If they be spies, documents may be obtained easily."

"Spies?"

"Aye, spies. Have either of them in your hearing declared that the Mass is blasphemy?"

"Nay, but——"

"It is this which the Spanish Protestant always does," I interrupted; "and yet did you note the fact that when I asked her a question concerning this she looked towards her father, who said something in Spanish?"

"Aye, I noted that, but he appeared to speak to himself rather than to her."

"Aye, but do you know what he said?"

"Nay, I do not know their lingo."

"He said, 'Do not speak Arabic in a Moor's house!'"

Mawgan Killigrew was silent for a few seconds; then he said angrily, "I see, I see! By Cormoran's bones, but we have all been blind!"

"Nay," I replied, "it was because I know a little Spanish that my eyes were opened. Did you note that from that time they changed the topic?"

"Aye, I noted that."

"I may be mistaken," I went on, "I may have read meanings into his words which do but treat him wrongfully. But we must beware, Mawgan Killigrew. Señorita Gomez is very beautiful, and I could see that while we were with her we both forgot everything save the desire to win her smile. If either of us were with her half an hour alone, she would turn our heads, and make us tell her all we know."

"Ah! you feel that," he said; "but tell me, Rupert Hamstead, why, if they be spies, should they come here?"

"I know not," I said. "But think a minute. They come from Toledo, and Father Parsons is believed to be in Toledo; Señor Toledo is there also. Then again, is not your father governor of Pendennis Castle, which overlooks one of the best harbours in the land? May it not be the purpose of Philip that the Armada shall land in Falmouth rather than at Plymouth Hoe, where Drake and Grenville command a fleet of vessels? Thus would not Father Parsons and Philip believe that, if they sent Señor Gomez and the señorita as believers in the Reformed religion, they would be welcomed by Master Killigrew, as, in truth, hath been the case? Then would they not believe that in time they would win your father's confidence, and learn something of his plans, Señor Gomez dealing with the older men, and the señorita making fools of such as you and me? Father Parsons is deep as the sea, man, and he would move heaven and earth to carry out his cherished plans."

"Your invention runs away with your judgment, Master Hamstead," said Mawgan Killigrew, whereupon I told him of my experiences with Master Seyton and Master Belmont, which made him open his eyes wonderfully.

"Besides," I went on, "perchance Señor Gomez is only one of the many cards which Father Parsons is playing, for, as all the world knows, he is a man of many schemes, believing that where one fails another will succeed. Even to-night, Mawgan Killigrew, your heart grew

bitter towards me because you believed that the señorita smiled on me rather than on you ; and such things must not be, if we are to fight together for our Queen and country."

"You be right, Rupert Hamstead," cried Mawgan, gripping my arm. "As I told you this night, I do not love this maid, and yet when I am with her I am not my own man. Tell me what you think we should do."

"We must have speech with your father straightway," I said, "and must learn whether he hath in aught told his mind to either of these Spaniards, and then we must act as necessity urges. Have you in your house a man, a watcher who can be vigilant and silent, who can see without being seen, and who is faithful ? "

"John Trenoweth," cried Mawgan.

"Aye, John Trenoweth," I cried. "John Trenoweth will serve. Señor Gomez and his daughter, if she be his daughter, must be watched, Mawgan Killigrew. So far, we only suspect him, and we cannot act on bare suspicion. Then we must not give up our Spanish mission. Whether or no Sir John Tremayne's daughter hath forsaken her faith, we cannot accept it as gospel because this Spaniard hath so declared it. It may be that even now——"

"Aye, aye, I see," cried Killigrew ; "but look you, man. If they be what you suspect, they will note our every movement, and if we sail for Spain, they will send word before us, so that when we get there we shall be but as lambs in the jaws of hungry wolves."

"All the more reason for silence, Mawgan Killigrew," I cried, "and all the more reason for acting promptly and discreetly."

"Let us right away to my father," cried Mawgan. "Let us seek his counsel."

"If he be not abed——"

"No, he will not be abed yet," cried Mawgan ; "he will want speech with you, and it is barely midnight. But you must be weary, man. You have been in the saddle since early morn."

"I know naught of weariness now," I cried. "Let us go straight to Master Killigrew "—which we did, and ere long found him seated with a cup of sack before him, and a pipe of tobacco in his mouth, which he smoked with evident enjoyment.

"Aye, lad," he cried with a laugh, "thou art like the rest. Even a long day's ride is not enough to keep thee from walking with a pretty maid. And a Spanish maid, too. But I do not blame thee. I should do the same, were I twenty-four, for she is beautiful beyond ordinary, and

although a Spaniard, a good Christian maid into the bargain. But see to it that you and Mawgan come to no broken heads over the business," and he laughed again in high good humour.

"As to that, Master Killigrew," I said, "both Master Mawgan and I have forsworn her company."

"Aye, and why?" he cried.

"First, because she's not English," I said, "and second, because I have a shrewd suspicion that she is not what she makes out to be."

"Go to, lad, go to. Do not, because she is a Spaniard, close your heart. All Spaniards are not bad."

"Not one Spaniard in a million loves anything English," I cried, whereupon I told him of what had come into my mind, which, when I had finished, made him silent for some time.

"It may be thou art right," he said, "but a Cornishman never suspects foul play without reason."

"I only ask for caution," I replied. "If Señor Gomez is what I suspect, he will have allies to whom he will report. For this reason he should be watched, and John Trenoweth is the man to do it."

"He will never play the spy. A good open fight John loves, but——"

"He will watch them because they have said his sweetheart hath forsworn her faith," I replied; "but pardon me, Master Killigrew, have you in any way revealed to Señor Gomez aught of your thoughts? Have you told him anything that will lead him to think anyone will go to Spain?"

Master Killigrew shook his head. "As to that, I am afraid I have been foolish," he said; "but when the man spoke as he did, when he spoke of his own sorrows, and the sorrows of others, when he told of what the Spaniards intended to do with England, I am afraid I did say more than was wise. But be of good cheer. I mentioned no name; I did not even say that Mawgan here would——"

"That would avail but little," I said. "If he is here as a spy, he will have found out more than you think, and he will have informed those who communicate direct with Spain. It makes our mission harder, but we go with our eyes open."

"Thou art a sharp lad, Rupert," said Master Killigrew, "but we must not rush at things. Let us not judge before we hear evidence. But if you be right in your fears, what are your plans?"

In answer to this I walked to the door and looked into the hall, also I saw to it that the windows were closed.

"What would you, man?" cried Master Killigrew. "Do you think that I have listeners and tale-bearers in Arwenack?"

"Walter Raleigh hath this saying," I said: "'Where dogs lie down there are fleas, and where a Spaniard hath been there are spies.' He may be right, or he may be wrong, but it is well to be careful. Besides, I remember that Master Seyton and Master Belmont could well be eight hours ahead of us in coming here; and it may be that they have already had audience with Señor Gomez."

"What! those fellows who accused thee and John Trenoweth of being Jesuits," cried Master Killigrew, for I had told him of my experience with these men. "I had not thought of that."

"It may be all foolishness on my part," I said, "but, as my father often says, a man never loses aught by taking precautions. This is what I planned after leaving Willacombe, and even now I cannot see how we can improve on it. Whether we find aught against Señor Gomez or no, we go to Spain. Even although Señora de Valencia and Esther Truscott have renounced their faith, we must still go. First, because if the report of Gomez be true, they have renounced it in fear of torture, and second because we have still our Queen and country to serve. Then comes this question: How can we get into Spain, and, what is of more importance still, how can we enter Toledo?"

"Easy, lad, easy," said Master Killigrew lightly, who had evidently given no thought to the matter.

"Not so easy," I answered. "Every port is guarded, and every English Protestant who tries to land on Spanish soil is taken and dragged before the Inquisitors. And, to be truthful, I do not wish to become acquainted with the Inquisitors, neither do I desire to be roasted for the glory of God."

"Well, what have you planned?" he asked.

"At present France is in many respects a neutral country," I replied. "We must therefore, as it seems to me, set sail for Bordeaux, and on arriving there buy horses, by means of which we must travel southward."

"Aye, but what about that great range of mountains?"

"That will be in our favour. From all I can learn, the mountains which divide Spain from France are bare and rugged. Moreover, the country is but thinly peopled for many miles."

"May God preserve you all!" said Master Killigrew fervently, after a few moments' deliberation.

"We must then ride southward until we reach Toledo,"

I said, "whereupon, after having gained entrance into the city, we must trust to God, and our own good wits."

"And you say Father Parsons is in Toledo?" he said.

"Aye, and Señor Toledo into the bargain. But then, so is Sir John Tremayne's daughter, together with Esther Truscott. Moreover, Toledo is governed by priests. Indeed, it is said that even Philip, ardent Catholic as he is, hath removed his court from Toledo, because the priests make him do their bidding."

"May God preserve you!" said Master Killigrew, again sighing deeply. "This is not like ordinary fighting, my lad. It is not sword against sword, and pike against pike, or even one sword against three or four. If it were, I should have no fear. But it is three straightforward Englishmen against a set of Papist flesh roasters."

"And what of that, Master Killigrew? We have still the mercy of God and our own good swords to trust in."

After this, late as it was, we stayed talking over our plans till far into the morning, after which I went to bed, and slept soundly. The following day I was aroused by a loud noise at the door, and the sound of Mawgan Killigrew's deep voice.

"God's grace be with you, Rupert Hamstead. It's nearly midday, a cloudless sky, and great news stirring."

"Ah!" I cried, "midday! Great news!"

"Open the door quick, man!"

A minute later Mawgan entered the room, his usually calm face flushed, his eyes burning with excitement.

"Rub the sleep out of your eyes, and listen," he said, for he saw that I was but half-awake.

For answer I plunged my head into a basin of cold water, and then, having well rubbed myself, was ready for anything.

"You sleep well," said Mawgan.

"Fourteen hours in the saddle, and what followed, is enough to tire any man," I replied. "But your news, man, your news!"

"Directly you went to bed last night," said Mawgan, "John Trenoweth came to me, and wanted to fight me. The news that Esther had changed her religion had so wrought upon him that he could not contain himself. He must fight or go mad, he said. So, not feeling like either fencing or wrestling, I told him of Señor Gomez, and what we wanted him to do. The effect was wonderful; all his desire to fight died away, and he became as eager as a boy. He grasped the situation in a moment, and, without telling

me his plans, rushed off to Falmouth as though the furies were behind him."

"Well!" I cried.

"Well, while it was yet dark this morning, he saw Señor Gomez leave the Queen's Head, and make his way towards Pendennick woods, where he met your two old friends of Willacombe."

"What, Seyton and Belmont?"

"The very same. Still, he got no word of their speech, for they spoke in low tones, even to the very end of the time they were together, or nearly so."

"But did they see him? Did the Spaniard get wind of the fact that John Trenoweth was at his heels?"

"Trenoweth says no. Besides, he heard a few words at the end."

"Aye," I cried, all alert. "What?"

Mawgan Killigrew hesitated a second, and looked on the floor like one in doubt.

"You said you would not speak to the Spanish maid again?" he said.

"As to that I have no remembrance, but what said he?"

"The man Seyton told Gomez that you were a gay young spark, and that if the Lady Gomez were alone with you she could get all your plans from you."

"Was that all?"

"Trenoweth said they planned together how you might meet, and how the señorita was to learn what was in your heart."

By this time I was fully dressed.

"But you will not meet?" said Mawgan Killigrew, half pleadingly. "You know what we said last night; and look here, Rupert, the thought of that maid fairly makes me mad. Even though I know you—you will never—that is——" and the poor fellow stammered greatly, while his face became as red as the face of a turkey-cock.

"Let us go to your father," I said.

"Nay, nay, he is of opinion that you should meet her. He says that you will get more out of her than she will get out of you. But he is mightily angered at being befooled so."

"Look here, Mawgan," I said; "I was not so carried away by this Spanish maid last night, but that I saw through both her and her designs, and——"

"But let us be off, Rupert—let us be off. I know she cannot care for me, and, even if she did, I should be afraid to trust myself with her."

"Remember this," I said; "it is my belief that they have knowledge of what is going on in Spain; therefore it is wise that we should find out what is in their minds. Still, that is your father's business. He is not influenced by the black eyes and fair face of this beauty. Mayhap there is but little to learn from her that will advantage us. We will leave her with your father, to deal with as he thinks best, and we will away. For, by my faith, in spite of my brave words, I be afraid of her. 'If ever you do go upon a venture, never speak to a woman,' Drake saith. Besides, it seems to me that if we do not go at once, Belmont will devise some means to keep us here."

"Ah! think you so?" he cried, "think you so? Then let us away! I tell you, man, I long even now to rush to that maid's side."

"Let us to your father first," I said, which we did, and such was our speech with him that on that same night we put to sea in a small vessel which belonged to Master Killigrew, but which he never intended to be used for the purpose to which we devoted it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST SIGHT OF SPAIN

I HAVE set down these things, not because they have so much to do with my story, but because they tell of the state of the country at the time of which I am writing. Besides, the doings of such as Masters Belmont and Seyton, as well as those of Señor Gomez and his daughter, tell of the means that were used to thwart those of the Protestant faith and to forward the plans of Father Parsons, who had hundreds of agents all over England ever waiting to do his will. Moreover, I say it advisedly, that although hitherto I had not been given to much speech with women, neither had I completely lost my head, the thought of the Señorita Gomez sent my heart all a-fluttering, and made me forgetful of the work I had in hand. For not only was she beautiful beyond the common, but she had a strange charm, which even at our first meeting was like to make a fool of me. Even now I ask myself what would have been the result had I allowed myself to wait at Arwenack a few days and been induced to spend much time in her company. For although I felt sure that she was but a tool of Parsons, she had a way of making me forget everything but a desire to win her smile. In truth, I believe it was the memory of my mother's words which made me decide to go on my mission with all speed, and so be out of the way of temptation.

Now of our voyage to Bordeaux there is no need that I should write. Nothing of import happened on the way, neither did our landing at that French harbour cause much attention. The men whom Master Killigrew had sent with us returned to England without spending any time in France, leaving us to continue our journey by land as God should guide us. And I may say here that while we were in France we fared right royally, and that for several reasons. For one thing, we found that the French people were exceedingly friendly. They asked no troublesome questions, neither did they inquire very closely into our business. Moreover, both Mawgan Killigrew and I knew their language, and spoke it without difficulty. The reason for this can be quickly told. As my father, Sir Richard Hamstead, hath related in the history of his life during the

reign of Mary, both he and Master Killigrew fled to the town of Rouen in France, where with others they remained many months in hiding from Stephen Gardiner and his minions. Here they learnt the French language, and, as was natural, both of them taught it to their children as soon as they were old enough to learn. This stood us in good stead now ; for although neither of us had ever before stood on French soil, we were able to make known our wants, and understand the answers of the people. It is true that John Trenoweth knew not a word outside his own tongue, but that did not trouble us at all, seeing he had neither to buy nor sell ; neither was it his business to seek information.

Our first business was to buy three horses, the which, after some trouble, we did, and good horses they were, too, although of French breed ; nevertheless, we made a mistake in buying them, because they were too slender of limb for the work required of them. For neither of us could be called light men. Both Mawgan Killigrew and myself, though barely twenty-four years of age, weighed nearly ten score pounds, and this without carrying an ounce too much of flesh, while John Trenoweth, though not above the average height of Englishmen, was, as I have said, a man of tremendous depth of chest and largeness of limb. Thus it came about that while our horses carried us well enough during our journey across that wide and dreary plain between Bordeaux and the foot of the Pyrenees mountains, I was not long in discovering that when climbing was expected of them they were next to useless. In truth, we should have done much better had we bought some stout mules, and been content to make a less brave show. Still, experience had to be paid for, not only in this, but in other matters, as we found to our cost before many weeks had passed away.

In spite of our good horses, moreover, it was but a weary journey across this tremendous plain. At times we caught a glimpse of the sea, but mostly we rode mile after mile without seeing anything but endless pine-trees and thick brushwood. We were a silent party, too, I remember, for although no man spoke of fear, we knew that when we once crossed the Spanish border our lives would scarcely be worth a silver groat a-piece. Besides, I think that while men can be brave enough when they are actually in the midst of danger, they are not without fear when they think of the nearness of its approach. Anyhow, I speak for myself in this matter. When my sword is drawn and my enemy before me, I can fight as bravely as another, and never feel a single qualm of fear ; but when I am alone

thinking of what danger may be near, and never knowing what form it may take, I am always ready to think the worst. Whether the others felt as I did, I know not; but, at any rate, we were not a gay trio as we travelled towards the Spanish mountains. John Trenoweth looked troubled and apprehensive. In his large grey eyes was an expression of haunting fear, while often I saw his teeth set and his arms grow rigid, as though some great dread were upon him. And this was not because he was not a brave man, but rather, I think, because the fate of the woman he had loved for more than twenty long years was enshrouded in mystery, and because he did not know what might happen to her before he was able to strike a blow in her defence.

As for Mawgan Killigrew, I believe that his mind was much back in Arwenack. For I discovered that the Spanish maid had fascinated him more than he was willing to confess, and that, in spite of the fact that she was doubtless a tool of the Jesuits, he could not free himself from the spell she cast over him.

"What think you?" he said to me one day. "Will my father take these Spaniards, and put them in prison?"

"It is for him to decide," I replied; "but methinks, if he is wise, he will."

"If I thought that, I would go back and——" and then he stopped short, and swore a great oath.

I spoke no further to him, for I saw that the devil had got hold of him, and that it would be best for him to fight him in silence. For I knew his temptation. The mission on which we were engaged was desperate. We had to go to Toledo, where a Protestant's life was not valued at a pin's head, and where our chances of rescuing Sir John Tremayne's daughter were as slender as a gossamer thread, and where, in trying to discover what plans the Spaniard had made in order to conquer England, we placed ourselves in the direst peril.

And yet we hesitated not, for we were Englishmen. We knew that the Señora de Valencia was in dire danger, and that only because of her late husband had a time been given to her to yield to the demands of the Church. This I had been assured of through my conversation with Master Killigrew, together with many other matters which I need not write down. To the report of Señor Gomez that both she and Esther Truscott had renounced the Reformed faith, we paid not a jot of attention, for his conversation with Seyton and Belmont showed that he was but a tool in the hands of the Jesuits. Moreover, the attention that they had bestowed on us assured me that they were deeply interested in

our plans, and that more might depend on our efforts than we could well understand. Besides, a great desire possessed me to know what preparations the Spaniard had made to attack England, and my heart grew large at the thought that God might use me as an instrument to discover their purposes, and arouse our beloved Queen to a true sense of our danger.

And so we journeyed on until we came to the town of Bayonne, where we stayed for the night, and then the following morning, while it was yet dark, we started again, feeling that we were now nearing the land over which Philip reigned, and where such as we were regarded as children of Belial.

We were riding, I remember, through a valley as the day broke, and so we could not see the country before us; but presently, when we reached the summit of a hill, the great mountain range burst upon our view as it were in a moment.

"Look!" cried Mawgan, "there is Spain, man, there is Spain!"

"Yes," said John Trenoweth, "and somewhere beyond those mountains my Esther is perhaps in prison, perhaps tortured. Let us on, my masters!"

Nevertheless, none of us moved. I think the great mountain range awed us by its wild yet solemn grandeur, for never had we seen the like before. To me they were enshrouded in mystery. The light clouds which hid some of their summits seemed to suggest the secrets which lay beyond, and in spite of myself I shuddered.

"In a few hours every man we meet will be an enemy," said Mawgan, with a laugh. Now that he was nearing the danger we had dreaded, his spirits rose. "We shall have to fight in the dark, too," he continued; "only one of us can speak their tongue, while their cunning ways will baffle us at every step."

"Aye," said John Trenoweth, "and had we not better form some plan of action? For days we have hardly spoken, and thus neither of us knows what is in the mind of the other. Not that I care," he added, hastily. "It is for me to go to Toledo, where Esther is, and when there to save her. And I will, too, by God I will!" and, standing in his stirrups, he shook his fist at the great towering peaks in the distance. "But have a plan," he continued; "let us not go like three wild colts that have never been broken to saddle or bridle. Are you going as Frenchmen or Englishmen? Both of you speak the French lingo, while, as for me, it is not necessary that I shall open my

mouth. It is said that Frenchmen can go without fear into Spain."

"No," cried Mawgan, "never will I pretend to be a Frenchman. It shall never be said that a Killigrew was willing to appear a Frenchman even to save his skin. No, by my grandfather's bones, no!"

To this we all agreed, as was natural we should, for who could dream of three Englishmen pretending to be of another country?

"Neither will I pretend to believe in their Popery," said John Trenoweth. "Even to save Esther I would not do that!"

Again we agreed, because we could not do otherwise, for although there was no need to tell the people in every town or village that we had given up their abominations, we could not, as those whose fathers had suffered perils and hardships in order to be free, deny our faith that Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, could save men from their sins.

"But," said Mawgan presently, "shall we seek to outwit the Spaniards? Shall we match our wits with theirs? Remember we be but three in an enemy's country, and that the Spaniard knows not the meaning of mercy."

"Aye," I cried, "but if we try and match cunning with cunning they will beat us. We be not fools; but if it comes to plotting, we shall be but children to them. We must fight with our own weapons. We will either speak the truth or hold our peace. If we fight, we will fight as Englishmen, if needs be to the very death, but we will fight fairly. And this we must do. We must stand or fall together. If one be taken prisoner, then we must know no rest till the others be taken prisoners also or our comrade set free."

"Amen to that!" said Mawgan; "that has been the pride of our fathers."

"And more," I went on; "we must never doubt each other's loyalty, no matter how black the evidence may be."

"Right again," said John Trenoweth, although I thought Mawgan cast his eyes on the ground.

"Then let us take an oath here and now that neither of us, either by word or deed, prove false to each other," I said. "That we will never, no matter what may happen, allow jealousy, or envy, or anger to keep us from standing by each other even to death."

Upon that we each dismounted, and we swore by Christ, who died for our sins, never to act unworthily to each other or to our cause, and, because we had sworn to do this, never

to doubt each other, but to trust in one another's honour, although a thousand voices might be raised to prove otherwise.

I shall never forget that time, even although I live five times the age ordinary to man. There we stood, three men, one almost past mid-age, and the other two only on the threshold of our full manhood. Not a soul was near. Above was the great dome of God's blue sky, while in the east the sun rose, dispelling the white mists, and revealing more and more clearly the great silent tract of country, while right there in front of us stood those giant mountains which hid the land beyond. Never, but once, do I remember a greater silence, for no birds sang. Perhaps this was because autumn was creeping on apace, or perhaps it was because birds were rare in that land where a man dared not pray save in the way appointed by the priests.

My heart I know grew hot within me, and a great joy, the joy which comes to every strong man in the face of danger, filled me.

"Let us think again of what we have to do, and the way we mean to do it," I said, for although I was the youngest man there, I had seen service, and they looked to me as their leader. So there and then we sketched our plans anew, and not one of us hesitated or showed fear because of the danger that grew nearer and nearer. And this was how we made it out.

That we three, Rupert Hamstead, Mawgan Killigrew, and John Trenoweth, were, by the grace of God, going to Spain to rescue the daughter of Sir John Tremayne, now called the Señora de Valencia, and her waiting woman and friend, named Esther Truscott, from the terrors of the Inquisition; and that we would not give up our endeavours to do this while there remained any possibility of accomplishing our work. That no danger, difficulty, or hardship should hinder us, and that we would, if needs be, give our lives rather than fail.

Moreover, that we would seek to find out the plans and purposes of King Philip concerning the great fleet he was supposed to be sending to England, the strength of this fleet in ships, in guns, and in men, both from Spain and from other nations, and that we would find means to make known our discovery to our Queen, and so give her councillors additional grounds for persuading her to be liberal both of men, ammunition, and money, in order to meet the enemy.

That, seeing the greatness of our work, we would always bear in mind certain things:

First, that we were Christians, believing only in Christ for salvation, and having discarded all those errors which were not found in the Word of God, and which caused so much misery during the reign of Queen Mary. Moreover, that we would be true to our faith, both by word and deed, under every circumstance.

Second, that we were Englishmen, and loyal subjects of the Virgin Queen Elizabeth, and that we must never do aught unworthy of our Queen and country.

Third, that therefore we must never strike an unfair blow; nevertheless, we must fight, as occasion arose, in Christ's name, and in Christ's strength; that we must never tell a lie, but always act straightforwardly and honestly as became our faith and country; that we must be loyal to each other, and that each must stand by his comrade even unto death; that we must never doubt each other, and never believe a stranger's word which attested to a comrade's guilt or unfaithfulness.

And all this, besides many other things, we vowed to do, as God gave us grace, and then each of us fell on his knees, and while the morning sun shone upon our uncovered heads, we prayed to God in Christ's name to make us faithful to our promises, and to help us to finish the work He had given us to do.

After that we mounted our horses again, and rode towards the great mountain range, no man speaking a word, but each one gazing earnestly towards the land to which we went, and each man praying in silence for strength and grace. And presently, as I watched the faces of Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth, I had no fear that either of us would be faithless to the other, neither would we be easily turned aside from our purposes, for each man's eyes were lit up with the light of God, and on each man's face was a look which would defy St. Thomas himself to doubt, so full was it of courage and resolution.

No man met us, for we took good care not to keep too close to the sea, where villages had grown up around the harbours, and strongly as we were tempted to stay at San Sebastian, the place so beguiling us by its beauteous bays and lovely surroundings, we kept straight on. For we had no time to bestow on beautiful places; all the same, we wondered why God had given so much loveliness to a people who were cruel as death, and who in the name of Christ had broken His commandments.

All around us, hill and valley rose and fell, while scattered here and there were the houses of the people; poor and ill-kept they seemed to us, so much so that they went far

to make us think that the Spaniard's boasted wealth was a dream. But at that time we had only just entered the Spaniard's land, and knew nothing of what lay beyond the mountains.

We settled to go straight to Toledo, not so much as approaching Madrid, and for this reason we had no sooner passed the bay of San Sebastian than we turned somewhat westward. For had we taken a straight course we should have to pass straight through Madrid, which we not only considered unwise, but dangerous. And here our difficulties commenced, for we quickly reached the mountains, which were so steep and rough that our horses scarcely benefited us at all. In truth, we had not gone far into the mountainous country before two out of three were so badly lame that they could scarce hobble along.

"Here's a pretty mess," said Mawgan ruefully. "Here we be in as desolate a land as the sun ever shone upon; not a soul is near to wish us God-speed, or give us aught to eat or drink, and, what is worse, night is coming on fast."

"As to that," said I, "we are thankful that no one is near, for while we are alone we are safe. As to getting food and drink, we have both. We can easily sleep beneath the rocks, for winter is not yet here, while a night's rest may set the horses right."

"You speak too fast about no one being near," said John Trenoweth, looking along the path which lay before us, and then we saw to our dismay that only a short distance away were a number of people whose appearance was so strange that we began to prepare for combat without more ado.

CHAPTER IX

"LOS GITANOS"

"SPANISH soldiers!" said Mawgan quietly, as he saw whether his sword was loose in its scabbard.

"Seyton hath outwitted us and out-travelled us, after all," I cried impatiently.

"Nay, master," said John Trenoweth, "this cannot be. No ship could leave Falmouth harbour without my master's knowledge and consent; thus we could not be out-travelled so soon, even if Seyton and Gomez surmised what road we should take. Besides, they be not behind, but before us."

"That is true," I replied; nevertheless, I was much disturbed at the ferocious aspect of the people we saw in our way.

"Besides, they cannot be Spanish soldiers," went on John Trenoweth, "unless they take their women folk with them."

"True, there are women," I said, "but the men carry swords, and every one of them looks a fighter."

"It may be they are peacefully inclined," said Mawgan; "but we had better go on slowly. That valley yonder will be a better place to spend the night than this."

While he spoke, I looked steadily towards the people who had so disturbed us, and as I saw the wild, unkempt appearance of the women, I felt sure we had not to deal with enemies. These people were in danger like ourselves, for I believed them to be a party of vagrants, which the Spaniards called *gitanos*.

"Let us go towards them," I said; "I believe they be gipsies, and, if I am right, they are under the ban of the Spanish law. They are regarded as heretics, even as we are, and look upon the Spanish soldier as an enemy."

"There is sense in that," said Mawgan. "If they be Spaniards, we can fare no worse if we go to them, seeing they are watching us now, and if they are gipsies we need fear nothing."

"Except that they may steal our horses," said John Trenoweth.

Whereupon we went towards them as rapidly as the condition of our horses and the nature of the pathway would

allow us. I noticed as we drew near that they looked upon us with some apprehension, and I thought I saw on the part of the women a desire to hasten away. As we came up to them a man spoke to us in a language which I could not understand, upon which I shook my head. He then turned to his companions and spoke to them with great rapidity, but in low tones. As far as I could judge they seemed relieved at his words, and I noticed that the women drew near to him as he parleyed further with us.

"*Es usted Español?*" (Are you Spanish?)

"No," I replied.

"*Habla usted Español?*" (Do you speak Spanish?) he continued, keeping his eyes fixed steadily on me.

"Only a little," I replied.

My words gave him still more confidence, for he came up close to us, and said in Spanish:

"What would your honours, and where go my lords?"

"We go into Spain on our affairs," I replied.

"Do you know you are in great danger?"

"We are always in danger," I replied, "but we are not afraid."

"The Spaniards are very great and very cruel," he replied.

"But you are not Spaniards," I answered.

"The great spirits be praised, no."

"Then we be friends," I said.

"What would my lord?" he asked.

"I would that a wise farrier like you look at our horses' legs, for two are lame; I would also find shelter for the night, for although the winter is not yet come, it is cold among these mountains."

"As to the horses, I can cure them quickly," he replied, "but as to telling you where you may find shelter, that lies not in my power. There is a village five miles southward where is an inn; but a señor from another land will do well not to put his head under the thatch thereof."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because a traveller is ever compelled to swear by the Mass, and that my lord cannot do."

"How do you know?"

"Because I am the son of a wise mother, and watch the stars at night."

As I translated this into English, Mawgan became grave, but I noticed that John Trenoweth nodded his head solemnly as though he believed in the gipsy's wisdom.

"My lords come from over the seas, from a land which the great King desires," continued the gipsy. "And my

lords go into great danger. Forward there is danger, and behind is danger."

At this I heard John Trenoweth say something about his mother, who, as Mawgan Killigrew had told me, was reported to understand the mysterious things of life and read the future.

"You think I will not swear by the Mass, because you will not swear by the Mass."

"My lord speaks truly," replied the gipsy; "therefore, if my lords will, they shall be lodged in safety, in a place not a mile from here towards the setting sun."

"And our horses?" I said questioningly.

"If the señors desire to travel through the Spaniard's land, they will do well to sell their horses, and obtain others thicker of body and stouter of limb. The señors be not slender maidens."

After this I asked other questions, which the gipsy answered readily, his companions standing silently around the while.

Whether we should have accepted their invitation to pass the night with them but for John Trenoweth I know not, for they were, in truth, a motley crew, and as lawless as the wild beasts; but John pleaded so earnestly that we yielded.

"They be wise people, and they will not betray us," he said; "thieves they may be, but they will not steal from us."

"Why not from us?" I asked.

"Because I have a token which my mother gave me," he said. "Twice have I shown it to the gipsies who camped at Goonhilly Downs, near the Lizard, and twice have they fallen before me, pleading that they might be allowed to do me a service. I speak not of it, but I have gipsy blood in my veins, and my mother knew their secrets."

"Let us see," I said, and thereupon I told the gipsy what John Trenoweth said.

"If your serving man hath our blood in his veins, and can show me the token, let him," said he.

Then John Trenoweth took from a pouch under his doublet a curiously shaped bit of ivory, on which were traced many characters which I could not understand, but which the gipsy scanned eagerly, and then, having spoken to his companions, came towards John, and showed him many signs of affection.

"We be your friends and servants," he said; "we will serve the señors faithfully, and may our fingers rot from our hands if we in aught do them harm. My lords can spend

the night with us in warmth and safety, and to-morrow morn, at break of day, they will find their horses healed ready for their journey."

Although we followed them, it was with many misgivings on my part, for I cared not for their sudden friendship; but Mawgan Killigrew, who believed in what the old friend and servitor of the family had said, joined in his persuasions, and I could do nothing but yield.

A little later we came to a curiously formed place between two mountains. It was completely hidden from view, and could be only entered, as far as I could see, by the narrow gorge through which we passed. All around the mountains rose almost perpendicularly, and were to all appearances impassable either by man or beast.

"We have placed ourselves in a trap now," I said angrily. "There is no chance of going out save by that gap, which is no wider than a castle moat, and, if they will, they can rob us and murder us without any man being the wiser."

"But they will not," said John Trenoweth, confidently, while Mawgan Killigrew walked by his horse's head, gaily humming an old Cornish song.

"Here my lords be safe," said the gipsy, who had done all the speaking. "There be but few who know of this place, and those who do, avoid it after nightfall."

I looked around, and saw two tents, in addition to some caves which had evidently been dug out of the mountain side. Here, moreover, we were met by others of their party, but they were all old, and, save for one white-haired old man, women. At first these regarded us with peculiar looks, but after the others had spoken to them they treated us with much courtesy.

In a shorter time than it takes me to tell, our horses were placed beneath some overhanging rocks, which formed a complete shelter, and were provided with provender, while we with the others sat around a huge crock, which was placed over a fire, and from which our supper was taken. Wine also was provided, together with many luxuries which I thought not to find.

"Have my lords finished their suppers?" said the gipsy, presently, and when we had nodded assent he gave orders that songs and dances should be given in our honour.

"The serving man of my lords is of our race," he explained, "and possesses that which we may not treat lightly."

I was about to thank him, when there emerged from a cave a gipsy maiden about eighteen years of age. She was

younger than he by several years, who, as far as I could judge, was twenty-eight or thirty years of age, but she bore some slight resemblance to him. What drew my attention to her, however, was not only her youth and beauty, but the tastefulness and richness of her attire. All the other women, although attired in some gaily-decked costume, were ill-kempt and dirty ; but this maid evidently bestowed much attention on the cleanliness and beauty of her person. Her hair, instead of hanging down her shoulders in long, tangled locks, was arranged around her head in the shape of a crown, and fastened by quaint ornaments, while on her feet were daintily shaped slippers.

" By Tre, Pol, and Pen," I heard Mawgan say, " but she is a beauty."

" Is she your sister ? " I asked.

" Yes, señor," he replied ; " she was born after my mother had given up hopes of having another child."

" She might be a queen," I said.

" She is a queen," he replied, " or she will be when my mother departs to the great spaces."

" And you are the king ? " I asked.

" I shall be when my father goes to the unknown," he replied. " Yonder old man is my father."

" And do many of you speak the Spanish tongue ? "

" Only my sister and myself, and two others," he replied. " We love neither the Spaniards nor their language. We speak our own tongue, and live our own lives. But my sister hath rare gifts, taught by an old man who once lived in England ; she knows also many words used by those who live in the land which the Spaniard hath sworn to conquer."

" What is that ? " asked Mawgan, who sat near.

" He saith that the gipsy maid yonder knows something of English," I replied.

" Good," said Mawgan again, but neither of us spoke further, for she began to sing, playing all the time upon a stringed instrument, the like of which I had never seen before. I could not understand a word she said, and yet the very sound of her voice held us spell-bound. And this was not to be wondered at, for not only was it rich and sweet, but it was wild and plaintive. Sometimes she seemed to be pleading with passionate earnestness, and again her voice melted into sadness, so sad that she made me think of a mother crooning over a sick child.

" She is like the Señorita Gomez," said Mawgan presently, " only more beautiful."

When she had finished her song four other gipsy

maidens came forward. They were gaily attired, but looked squalid and dirty compared with the young queen. Each of them carried little pieces of wood, hollowed in the shape of a nut, and fastened together by means of gaily coloured string. Then another maiden took the stringed instrument and began to play, while the four beat time with the wooden things. These I afterwards learned were called *castanets*, a kind of musical instrument brought into Spain by the Moors. At first neither the music of the stringed instrument nor the castanets called forth our admiration, but presently it acted upon us as a charm. And this was scarcely to be wondered at, for the sound thereof seemed to fill the great amphitheatre in which we sat. Echo woke echo, and answered it back again in such a way that a thousand instruments might have been played, instead of five. Moreover, when presently the gipsy queen stepped into the circle and began to dance, I for one forgot where I was. For the time I ceased to think either of our work or our danger, so entranced was I by the grace of the young maid's movements. Moreover, the scene doubtless added to the charm of it all. Above, the harvest moon sailed in a cloudless sky, while all around the giant mountains lifted their peaks heavenward. The strange look on the faces of the gipsies, too, made the scene more memorable.

For they did not seem like men and women at all. It is true that the ruddy glow of the fire, mingled with the rays of the moon, revealed their features in a strange light, but that was not all. Their eyes had an unearthly gleam, while on their faces was a look I had never seen before. Each one nodded his head as if to keep time to the music, while each one swayed his body as if to harmonise with the dancing of the gipsy maid.

Presently the music changed, and a different dance was commenced. Then it was that Mawgan, who had been watching in silence, burst forth with a glad cry.

"Good!" he shouted. "I know that dance."

"What saith my lord?" asked the gipsy of me.

"He says that he knows the dance," I replied.

"Will he do my sister the honour of dancing with her?" he asked.

I told Mawgan what he said, whereupon the young Cornishman sprang to his feet.

At a sign from our friend, the music stopped, and then, having been told what had been said, the young gipsy maid bowed to Mawgan, and when the music again commenced, they began to dance together. A great silence fell upon the encampment as we watched, and presently

when they saw that the dance was also a love story, the interest grew. And this was no wonder, for a nobler couple would be difficult to find. Mawgan, strong and straight of limb, moved upon the grass with perfect ease, while the gipsy maid quickly told us that she was an actor as well as a singer.

This was the story that they told, while the sound of the stringed instrument echoed through the rocky ravine, and the motley crew watched with wild, gleaming eyes.

A gipsy maiden all forlorn, filled with strange longings and wild hopes, is wandering in the glades. Suddenly there comes to her a knight from a far-off land, who, fascinated by her beauty, seeks to gain speech with her. They fall in love with each other, and he pleads with her to fly with him. For a time she seems to yield, but presently remembers that her life is different from his; that she can never be happy away from the associations of her life. Thus the knight pleads in vain, and the gipsy, although longing to yield to his desires, elects to remain among her own people.

And this story they told, although they spoke no word. But their gestures were sufficient. You could see the love in the young maid's eyes; you could see her passion in the way she pointed to stars and mountains, and in the graceful gestures of her body. Mawgan, too, caught the spirit of the scene, and as he knelt before her it seemed as though he were not acting at all, but pleading with all the earnestness of his life.

"Where did my lord learn that dance?" asked the gipsy.

"Some gipsies in Cornwall taught it me," replied Mawgan, when I put the question to him.

"It was well done," replied the gipsy; "and now my lords will desire to rest."

I was about to assent to this when the gipsy maid came to us, and asked, in broken English, if she should tell our fortunes.

"Aye," replied Mawgan, fairly carried away by the feelings of the moment.

The maid took his hand, and looked steadily at it for some seconds, then she dropped it with a sigh.

"I will not read my lord's fortune," she said.

"Why?" asked Mawgan.

"Because it is better he should not know. But my lord need not fear. He will never disgrace his name."

"As to that, I trust not," replied Mawgan, with a laugh. "But I pray you to tell me all my hand tells you."

"That I may not," she replied; "but will my lord

remember one thing. When dangers overpower him, and all hope seems gone, will he utter one name?"

"Aye," said Mawgan; "if you will tell me the name."

At this she whispered a word in his ear, and if ever a man saw love in a woman's eye, I saw love in the gipsy maid's eyes that night.

After this she looked at my hand, and at John Trenoweth's, but I could see that she was but playing at fortune-telling. She spoke not in the same tones as she spoke to Mawgan, neither did her eyes have the same look. Rather she told us a hackneyed story, and she laughed as she told it, as though she wanted us to see that she spoke in jest.

"My lords be safe," said the gipsy who had first spoken to us, and who led us to a cave in which lay a great heap of grass. "Watchful eyes will be open all the night, and hands will be ready at every moment to defend you."

"We be indeed grateful," I replied; "I shall ever speak well of the gipsies in the days to come."

"We cannot but show kindness to those who have with them one who has our blood and carries our token," he replied.

"But if we had neither of these things," I said curiously; "what would have happened to us?"

At this he laughed, but he made no other answer.

"What is your sister's name?" I asked.

"Inez," he replied in a low voice. As he spoke it sounded like *Eeneth*, but I had once before met a Spanish woman who bore the name, and so I recognised his pronunciation.

"And your name?" I asked.

"Gaspar," he replied.

"No other name?" I asked.

"No, Gaspar lo Gitano, solamente. And yours, my lord?"

"Rupert Hamstead."

"Ruperto," he repeated, "I will remember. And the name of your friend, and serving man?"

When I had told him, he repeated our Christian names several times, as though he would impress them on his memory. "'Ruperto, Mawgan, Juan,'" he said, again and again. "I will remember, my lords, and whenever you hear the name of 'Gaspar lo Gitano' you will remember that you have a friend near."

After this, and after again assuring us that we might lie in safety, he left us in the cave.

"This night hath been worth coming to Spain for," said Mawgan to me presently.

"Aye," I replied, and then I tried to go to sleep, but I could not, although John Trenoweth encouraged us in this by snoring loudly.

"Asleep, Rupert?" It was Mawgan who spoke.

"No, I cannot sleep."

"Neither can I. I wonder if I shall ever see her again?"

"Nay," I replied, "why should you?"

"I know not," he answered; then, after some minutes' silence, "I would I knew the meaning of the word she spoke to me."

"What was it?" I asked.

"Eeneth," he said, and then I knew that the gipsy maid had told him her own name.

For a long time we lay, and presently when I was falling asleep I heard the noise of voices outside.

I lifted my head and listened.

"We seek to do you no harm, neither will we unless you play us false," said a voice, "but if you do you shall suffer even as they do."

"Who sent you?" and I knew it was Gaspar who spoke.

"We seek three English spies," was the reply. "We have tracked them here, so tell us where we may find them."

At this I drew my sword, for I had not taken off my clothes, and listened again.

CHAPTER X

THE EYES OF A GIPSY

"ENGLISH spies, excellencies?" I heard the gipsy repeat.

"Aye, English spies. Do not try to deceive us. We know your tricks. You have them safe enough, for Pedro the shepherd saw three men come to you, and saw you guide them here. Well, we do not desire your booty, but we must have the men. Take all their possessions, if you will, but deliver the men up to us."

"But who be they, excellencies? I have but lately come to the camp, for I have been to Catalonia. Therefore what hath happened I may not know. Be they young or old, *caballeros* or *rusticos?* Be they men of the sword or *baratilleros?*"

"Nay, waste not time, nor seek vain parleying. They cannot escape, for we have men guarding the only entrance to this devil's kitchen. Neither think that you can charm us with your witcheries. We have two holy men here, who, if you seek to do us harm, have power to curse, by bell, book, and candle."

"Far be it from me to oppose the will of my lords," replied Gaspar, with apparent humility. "As for the holy men, I pray them not to curse *los pobre gitanos.*"

"Then do our bidding," replied another, in harsh, guttural tones, "for these men be not only spies, but heretics; aye, and heretics of the worst kind. The Holy Church can forgive poor heathens like thee, for neither thou nor thy people have yet been fully instructed in the one true faith. Wandering Ishmaelite as thou art, we may be lenient with thee until thou hast had more time for repentance. But these men come from a land where the light of the Gospel hath shone, and where a Christian Queen married our gracious King Philip. But they have departed from the faith, and have taken a usurping she-wolf to be their Queen."

"To work, to work, Santa Padre," said the one whose voice I had first heard. "This is no time for preaching."

"Nay, but I must to mine office," was the reply. "Besides, hath not our King given special command that every

heretic Englishman shall be taken and tried, and, if unrepentant, burned, according to the laws of the Holy Inquisition, and for the glory of God ? "

" Aye, but the fellows be spies."

" And heretics," was the rejoinder.

By this time both Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth were awake, and at a sign from me each had drawn his sword and stood ready for action. Not that there seemed any hope of doing aught, for we were like rabbits in a hole. The cave in which we had entered to sleep was in no part more than ten feet across, neither was there height enough for a man to stretch himself. I had heard that the one means of escape was guarded, and therefore, as the hollow was filled with King's men, there was nothing for it but to be led prisoners whither they would. Not that I purposed giving in without a struggle. As Mawgan whispered to me, " Be they ten or be they fifty, we will give a good account of some of them before they take our swords."

Nevertheless, our case was desperate. We could not go out of the cave without walking into their arms, while, if we remained there, they would sooner or later find us out, and then we should be as helpless as a rabbit when a weasel gets him by the throat. Our only hope was in Gaspar the gipsy, and so I continued to listen, giving as well as I was able the purport of their speech to my companions.

" What will you, excellencies ? " I heard Gaspar say, presently.

" We will that thou bring them to us," said the man who was evidently a priest. " The night is clear, so we can watch that they do not escape ; but mind, if thou in aught betray us, thy soul shall go to the fiends."

" Bring them to you, excellencies ! " said Gaspar ; " that I dare not. First, I have but just returned from Catalonia, and therefore, if they be here, I know not where they be lodged. Then, if they be such fellows as your excellencies describe, they will make short work of me."

" Besides," said the first speaker, " we will not let you out of our sight, for there is money in this night's work. So take us straightway to them."

" That I cannot do without first consulting my father, who—that is, if they be here—hath led them to their beds ; follow me, excellencies," and with that I heard the sound of retreating footsteps. At this my heart beat loud with hope, for I believed that Gaspar had a purpose in doing this.

I was on the point of creeping out of the cave when I heard a low, warning sound.

"Eeneth," said Mawgan; "that is what the maid bid me say."

"Aye, my lord, but not aloud," said a voice, and I perceived that it was the gipsy who spoke. "But come quickly; the black crows called priests are near."

"But whither?" I asked.

At this she made no reply, save to take Mawgan's left hand, and lead him out of the cave.

"Follow!" she whispered.

We obeyed blindly, for we knew not what else to do, but each of us held his naked sword in his right hand.

A few seconds later we were groping along a dark passage, which, as far as I could judge, was cut out of the mountains. How long we were in this passage I know not, for I was too much wrought upon to take note of the time. Neither did we see aught, for we were in Pharaoh's darkness, and nothing could we hear but our own footsteps, and an occasional whisper as the gipsy maid spoke to Mawgan.

Presently a light appeared; not bright, it is true, although it seemed bright to us, and then we breathed freely again, for we saw the moon shining in the heavens.

"My lord hath gone by a way known only to my people," said the maid, looking at Mawgan, "and he is now safe."

We all looked around, and saw that we must have passed into another valley, for an entirely different scene presented itself. It is true the mountains still towered, but they were not precipitous; so sloping were they, indeed, that a sure-footed man might dare venture to climb.

"It grieves me much that my lord could not spend his night in peace," said the gipsy, and I noted that she paid no heed to anyone save Mawgan, "but we could not hinder the disturbers. His horse also he cannot have, for it could not bear him; but, if my lord will wait until the cloud passes over the moon, I will return."

With that she moved away from us, and a minute later was hidden by the great rocks which abounded everywhere.

"Said I not that the gipsies would befriend us?" said John Trenoweth. "I knew how they would regard that token."

And, in truth, it seemed that Gaspar had paid much heed to it; and yet, for the life of me, I could not help believing that Inez thought not of John Trenoweth's token, but of Mawgan. However, I said naught, for the time was not for such thoughts.

"What shall we do without horses?" I said presently. "It is many a long mile to Toledo across the mountains,

and without horses we shall be like a boatman without oars or sail."

Scarcely had I spoken than I heard the sound of footsteps, and in the light of the moon I saw three animals of some sort coming towards us ; a minute later the gipsy maid appeared again.

"My lord must follow me until he reaches the top of the mountain," she said, and, still without giving heed to us, she led one of the animals up a steep, rugged pathway.

For my own part I seemed like one that dreamed, yet, standing before us were two mules, which, as far as I could judge in the moonlight, were in fair condition, and looked strong and enduring. So without ado we followed, leading the mules, and never a man speaking a word until we had reached the mountain ridge, where we saw a broad valley before us, and what seemed to us a track through it.

"Is my lord content ?" said the gipsy, looking towards Mawgan.

"We owe our lives to you," said Mawgan, "and we thank you. But we must pay for these horses—that is——"

"If the stars tell their tale truly, my lord will reach Torrijos in safety," replied the maid, "and there he will find some of my people. If he will seek the chief, and show him what I will give my lord, he will give him good value for these animals, which he must leave with him. More I cannot do at present, but the moons rise and set again, and the moons also grow large and then become small again, so it may be that when my lord needs help, and he will cry aloud the word I have spoken to him, then may I be near. If that time comes, the horses which my lord leaves behind shall be bought for the sum which the gipsy chief shall give him."

And this the maid said slowly, and with much hesitation, for her knowledge of the English tongue was but small. Yet she spoke it prettily, while all the time she kept glancing shyly at the young Cornishman.

"And is Torrijos far from Toledo ?" asked Mawgan.

"It is but a morning's journey," she replied, "and I pray my lord be full of caution, for my lord is what the priests call a heretic. Neither will it be well for him to ride a horse through the Wamba Gate, for by so doing he will attract watchful eyes."

At this she put a packet in Mawgan's hand, and turned as if to leave us.

"And will your friends be safe ? Will the Spaniards not know that you have aided our escape, and take vengeance ?" said Mawgan.

"Gaspar is not an unweaned child," she replied, with a touch of scorn, "and we do not live among these mountains for naught. The priests and the soldiers will rave, and tear their hair, but what of that? Gaspar will mourn with them, and laugh in his heart. He will arouse all our people, and give orders that search be made everywhere; but what then? The *caballeros* will threaten, and the priests will curse, and my people will pretend to tremble. But the nights pass, and the morrow always comes, and naught will happen save what must happen."

"And there is no reward we can give you?" I interposed.

"I am no beggar," she said haughtily, "and yet I would beg something of my lord," and again she turned to Mawgan: "some *recordador*, that, if the time comes when I can help him, I may send it to him, that he may know that a friend is near."

Whereupon Mawgan took a gold chain which he wore, and this he placed round the gipsy's neck, while I could swear that I saw the blood rush into her cheeks and her eyes burn like live coals.

"*Adios*," said Mawgan, using one of the very few Spanish words he had learned, and holding out his hand. "*Adios*, and may God reward you."

The maid knelt on one knee and kissed his hand.

"*Vaya usted con Dios*," she said, and I thought I detected a sob in her throat; then she added, as if doubting, "*Si hay Dios*." Then she turned to us. "*Adios, señors*," she said coldly, and turned away.

"Some time I hope to reward you for this," said Mawgan.

"I seek not reward," she replied, "that is——" and then she hesitated. "Keep always towards the midday sun," she said; "trust no man, and, still more, trust no woman."

Then she left us, while we stood still, watching her, as she descended the mountain side. Once she stopped and looked back, and, seeing us, she waved her hand.

"*Hasta lo vista*," we heard her say, and then she was lost to sight.

For some time neither of us spoke nor made movement. In truth, I think each one felt as though he walked in his sleep, the which, I think, was no wonder, for the night had been a strange one. The time must be now early morning, and the moon was beginning to lower itself beyond the mountains which hid us from San Sebastian. Not a breath of wind stirred, and nothing could be seen save that vast

range of mountain land which rose and fell like a great sea. Such a silence, too, as men seldom experience reigned over us, a silence which seemed to make a noise. Moreover, in the light of the moon the mountains looked ghostly, as though, indeed, they were not solid rock at all, and might presently melt away, like wind clouds, or the vapours which sometimes appear when the sun first peeps over the eastern hills. Everything was unreal. The evening among the gipsies, the dance, and the song seemed only phantom memories, while the coming of the King's men and the walk through the long passage seemed, as Master Will Shakespeare says, like that stuff of which dreams are made.

Presently Mawgan aroused himself.

"What said she?" he asked. "I did not understand her."

"She said, when going down the mountain side, 'Until we see each other again,'" I said.

"Yes, but before that, when I bade her good-bye?"

"She said, 'Go with God,'" I made answer.

"Aye, that is well. 'Go with God.' Let us thank God for delivering us."

The which we did, and afterwards we rode on in silence for many a long mile; in truth, scarce a word was spoken until daybreak, and then I noted, while John Trenoweth and I rode mules, Mawgan Killigrew rode a fine young horse. But neither did John nor I make remark, for, after all, it was not for us to raise a laugh because the gipsy maid had looked on him with love-lit eyes, and as a consequence regarded us as mere serving men.

I reckon that the clock of Hamstead Manor House must have struck eight, when presently we drew near a small hamlet, where we were met by a crowd of dirty children and ragged, ill-fed-looking men. To my surprise and delight, we attracted but little notice, and this I attributed to the fact that our saddles and trappings had a Spanish appearance. Neither did the way in which I spoke their tongue seem to arouse their suspicions. And the reason for this, as I afterwards discovered, was because the country hath many dialects. Thus a man living in the Basque hills, or in Catalonia, hath a speech which is strange to those who dwell in Andalusia.

Here we found an inn where we obtained not only food and wine for ourselves, but fodder for our beasts, and that without being asked awkward questions. I discovered, moreover, that there were many travellers who called at the village inns among the mountains, concerning whose business the people knew nothing.

I would gladly have remained here and rested after our experiences, but we reflected that the men who had been in search of us would naturally follow us, and it was our desire to keep free from them. We accordingly kept well to the west, so as to give them no clue to our whereabouts, and so good was the fortune that attended us that day followed day and night followed night without mishap of any sort befalling us.

Moreover, after we left the great range of mountains we found travelling easier, although perhaps less pleasant. In truth, the great plains were sad and weary beyond words. We never heard the birds sing, while laughter among the people was rare. Still, we had naught of which we could complain ; especially when, at the end of the sixth day, a passer-by told us that we were no great distance from Toledo. We were in a valley at the time, I remember, and, the man seeming friendly, I asked him what kind of a city Toledo was.

" It is one of God's wonders," he replied. " Wait till you get to the top of yonder hill, and look : then you will know what I mean."

" And Torrijos ? " I asked ; " is that far away ? "

" Torrijos is but an hour's journey," he said ; " a place of sties fit only for pigs and *gitanos*, but Toledo is the home of kings."

At this he passed on, never smiling nor looking back, while we climbed the hill before us. When we reached the top we stopped, and looked, but neither of us spoke a word. Beneath us but a little distance lay a squalid village, but away in the distance was the city which we sought to enter, and in which, although we knew it not then, God had willed us to have experiences which surely never happened to other men.

CHAPTER XI

TOLEDO

"FROM here Toledo seems but a castle," said Mawgan, after we had looked at it some time.

"Aye, but it is many miles away," I replied. "When we draw nearer, it will reveal itself in its true proportions."

"It seems like a great prison," said John Trenoweth. "But what of that? Esther is there, and something tells me she is yet alive. Let us hasten on, my masters, let us hasten on," and I saw by the glitter of his eyes that he could scarcely restrain his passion from bursting forth.

But we moved not. Somehow, the sight of the city held us as by a spell, for there was that about it which was strange. Aye, and more than strange: it was awe-inspiring. Perhaps this was because the shadows of the coming events had already fallen upon us, but more, I think, because Toledo is a place which, when once seen, can never be forgotten.

It stands on a great, rugged eminence, so rugged and so steep that ten men could forbid fifty an entrance thereto. Nearly surrounding it, moreover, is a great river, the waters of which are brown and fast-moving, as though eager to get away into the broad plains, but which cannot for the great rocky gorges which form their banks. I was told afterwards that this same river, the Tagus, which empties itself into the sea at Lisbon, had in the past been coloured by the blood of those who had been killed within Toledo's walls, and that, although the great palace on the top is hundreds of feet above the bridge which spans it, the blood of slain victims ran into it like water rushes into a valley after a thunderstorm.

But at that time we knew naught of this. Stern and forbidding as the great grey walls looked that day, they bore rather an aspect of peace than of storm. The waters of the Tagus, which well-nigh girded their base, shone like a streak of silver light, and the edge of the ravine on which the city walls were built told us of strength and security. That day, too, the palace called the Alcazar shone in the sunlight, while the spire of the great cathedral, surmounted by a cross, would have given us a feeling of confidence, did we

not remember that the Spaniards had in the name of the Cross done deeds at which devils might tremble.

On the eastern side of Toledo we saw great, broad plains, broken by hillocks, but on its west was fine and undulating country covered with olive-trees.

"Well, what think you?" said Mawgan, at length.

"Think?" I made answer. "I think that ere nightfall we must be behind those walls."

"Aye, and, once there, shall we ever get out again?" he said, like one musing.

"That's as God wills," I replied; "but remember Sir John Tremayne's daughter is there, and remember, too, that she is in the power of such as Señor Toledo. It's no child's game we have to play, Mawgan, especially when her own daughter is of another faith."

"Aye, and Esther is there," cried John Trenoweth. "Let us hasten on, my masters!"

Without further parley we descended the slopes of the hills towards Torrijos, which, as the passer-by had said, was but a squalid hole, the houses of which were no better than sties. Here, after some inquiry, we found the gipsy encampment, and presently we were led to the chief, who greeted us surlily, like a man in grave doubt as to our right to speak to him.

I discovered afterwards that he took us for King's spies, and for that reason the other gipsies kept their hands on the handles of the ugly knives they wore, as though determined to defend themselves to the very last. But all these disappeared when Mawgan showed him that which Inez had given him, and after we had haggled some little time about the worth of the animals we had ridden, and finally settled the matter, he became communicative.

"For some reason we have not been much troubled of late," he said, "but one never knows what may happen before the sun goes down. Sometimes the priests regard us as Moors, and then we be hunted like rats; then again they remember that we be *gitanos*, and they do naught but threaten. For some time now the Inquisition hath done but little, but report hath it that, because of this, infidels have become loud of speech, and as a consequence the Holy Church is taking steps to search them out, and bring them to their knees. But yesterday was Butuccio, my son, near Toledo, where he heard great news."

"What news?" I asked.

"It is said the Council of the Inquisition hath met at the church of El Cristo de la Vega, and hath decided that some notorious heretics be burned before many suns have set."

"This may be but idle gossip," I made answer.

"True," he replied, "but when your excellency remembers that Butuccio saw men fixing stakes on the spot where the old Roman circus used to stand, and where all the Toledo heretics have been burned, it seems as though there may be truth in it."

This I told to Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth, both of whom looked grave, but who, nevertheless, never dreamed of abandoning our project.

"We expected this," said John Trenoweth; "but by the mercy of God we have been protected so far, and it may be that He Who feeds the ravens may see fit to allow us to go back to England again when our work is done. Let us hasten on, my masters."

And this was his constant plea whenever we stopped at any place. "I tell you," he repeated again and again, "my Esther needs me, and if we do but loiter we may be too late. Ah! woe is me for leaving her uncared for all these years!"

"Doubtless," said the gipsy, "my lords have friends in Toledo, or they would never dare resort thither, especially as I am told that nearly all Englishmen are in danger of their lives in Spain. Perchance, excellencies, you know the English priest who, report says, hath great power in Toledo, and whose will is obeyed even by the Archbishop."

"What Englishman?" I asked; "what is his name?"

"Padre Parsons," replied he; "a man, I am told, much beloved by the King."

At this my heart felt as though a cold hand were upon it, for I knew that, should we but fall into his power, we were lost indeed.

"Moreover, if my lords would enter Toledo to-day," went on the gipsy, "it will be well for them to go quickly. For the Wamba Gate and the Puerta del Sol, by which they must enter, be closed at sundown, and it would go hard with any man who sought to enter afterwards."

Accordingly, we made our way to Toledo with all speed, no one of us speaking much, for men who know that they go to danger spend but little in speech. Not that I think one of us shrank from our work. John Trenoweth's eyes still shone with that steely light which told me he would stop at nothing, while I knew by the way that Mawgan Killigrew pressed his lips together that not only did he expect danger, but he was prepared to meet it.

As we presently descended a hill which led to the river the sight that impressed us most was the great cathedral,

whose high tower hid even the Alcazar, the royal palace, built on the summit of the great rock on which Toledo stands. A little later one of the bells in the tower gave forth a death toll, which fairly made me shiver.

"By our Virgin Queen," said Mawgan, "but that is not a cheerful welcome."

"It is death, death everywhere," said John Trenoweth; "but what of that, my masters? We must on!"

No sooner had we crossed the bridge than we saw how impregnable Toledo was. We now realised that the Tagus was far down below the city walls, while its banks were a mass of jagged rocks, which no man could climb, even although the city walls were not built upon them. The river, too, was deep, and its dark brown waters, now that we stood by them, did not shine as when we looked from the distance, but seemed sullen and forbidding, as though to tell us that the city was cruel, even as they were.

No man gave us speech as we climbed the hill towards the Puerta del Sol, which was the Spaniard's way for saying "The Gate of the Sun," neither did we notice aught that need disturb us. It is true that both men and women turned and looked after us, as though our appearance were strange; but of that we recked nothing. But when we came to the great wooden doorway our troubles began.

"Who goes?" asked the sentinel, who stood erect, holding his pike before him.

"Travellers, señor."

"From where?"

"San Sebastian," I made answer.

"You are not Spaniards?"

"No, señor, but we be men of quality, like yourself, and we seek to have affairs with men of quality."

He looked at us suspiciously, but I had spoken to him as though he were a *caballero*, instead of a simple soldier, and my courtesy pleased him, and he allowed us to pass.

"Now," said Mawgan, "we are in, and that right easily. I did not think we should be able to enter with so little ado."

"Evidently there be many travellers," I replied; "moreover, no one seems to look upon us as Englishmen. I verily believe that our boldness in making entry into Toledo, where we are hated so much, stands us in good stead."

"But we must never deny that we are English; mind that," said John Trenoweth sternly.

"That was our compact," replied Mawgan, "but, surely, there seems no need to deny anything. The streets

are full of men who look as though they might be of different nationalities, and so we pass unnoticed."

And in this he spoke the truth, for the narrow streets were so crowded that, had we not kept close to each other, we should have surely lost one another ; and this was to be avoided, for in such an event, ignorant of the city as we were, it would be no easy matter to discover the others, whereabouts. For the streets formed a perfect network' and were nothing more nor less than a mere maze, which curious men sometimes have made in their gardens to give entertainment to their visitors.

"And now to work," said John Trenoweth. "Near us is my Esther. My God ! think of it ! She whom I have loved for more than twenty long years, and whom I have not seen since that day she left with Mistress Tremayne and Señor de Valencia, may be within a stone's throw of me now. Think of it, my masters ! "

But, as may easily be seen, we could not set to work with the speed that John Trenoweth desired. Of necessity we were ignorant of all things in Toledo. No man knew us, nor had we an inkling of an idea where this or that man lodged. During our journey from San Sebastian we had not dared to ask questions. We knew that we were followed by those whose duty it was to take us prisoners. Evidently Señor Gomez and Masters Seyton and Belmont had discovered our departure from Falmouth harbour, and had sailed after us. By some means they had divined our road from France, and had come near to running us down. And this was not such a difficult matter as at first appeared, for there was scarcely another way by which an Englishman dared to enter Spain. Every Spanish port was closely guarded, and, as Englishmen were taken and dragged before the Inquisitors without parley, they knew we should not dare to enter by one of their harbours.

As matters stood, therefore, we had come to Toledo knowing but little, save that the Señora de Valencia and her daughter lived there, and that Esther Truscott had some little time before been with them as serving woman. That the Señora de Valencia and Esther Truscott were in danger of the Inquisition we also knew, for the story of Señor Gomez that both had embraced the Romish faith we had discarded. Moreover, before we left Arwenack Master Killigrew told us many things which to my mind destroyed for ever the thought that they had so quicky changed their views.

Our first business, as I understood it, was to find a quiet house where we could lodge in peace, and then, as best we

could, obtain information concerning the abode of the Señora de Valencia. But here I saw that we should be much handicapped. If the señora and her serving woman were known as English, and under the ban of the Church, the fact of strangers asking questions concerning them might easily arouse suspicion. And this we did not desire to do, for by that means we should be clapped into prison before you might count fifty. We must, therefore, go to work with great caution, and discover by roundabout means that which we desired to know.

It is true John Trenoweth's patience was much put to the test, but we made him see the reason of it all, and so, although he chafed like a young colt first broken to the bit, he settled down to our plans without more ado.

Now the matter of lodgings was a sore difficulty. If we went to an inn, we should naturally be exposed to the gaze of any who might be staying there. An inn is a gossip shop, no matter what country one may be in; and although one might learn the news of the city by mixing freely with men, the danger was too great. The other alternative was to seek shelter in some poor man's house, where we might have much privacy and yet ask many questions. But to find such a place was not easy, for, as is well known, the whole of Toledo was full of priests and priests' minions. They, indeed, ruled the city: so much so, that even Philip the King declared he was not King in Toledo, and moved his Court accordingly. But this I had heard: Many of the inhabitants of Toledo were Moors, and still hated the Spaniard and all his ways, although, in order to save their lives, they had disavowed their Mohammedan faith and accepted Christianity. It is true they were a lying, cruel people, but I reflected that we should be more likely to find shelter in one of their houses than by seeking to live with a Christian. In addition to all this, moreover, no Moor was allowed to be a servant of the Church, and thus would not be in communication with any who would give their thumbs to drag us to the stake.

After walking about the city some time, I spied a man, who, I was sure, was of Moorish descent, and who, by the pannier of food which he carried, I judged to be the father of a family. Without ado, therefore, I accosted him and asked him if he could direct me to the Calle del Pozo Amargo. This street I had seen near the cathedral, and which I knew was some distance from where we stood.

"It is not easy to find, señor," replied the man. "Still, if you go to the cathedral, and ask there, you can find a boy who will guide you thither."

"Ah, then, it is far," I replied. "I am sorry for that, for it is now well-nigh dark, and I seek a place of lodging for me and my friends, and I do not wish to be far away from the Calle del Refugio."

This street I mentioned because it looked quiet, and because it was close to where we stood.

"You wish for lodgings?" said the man, looking at us steadily.

"Aye, good and quiet," I replied.

"In the Calle del Refugio?"

"Aye, if it be possible."

"And my lords would pay well?"

I shrugged my shoulders, after the manner of the Spaniards, and smiled.

"My lords be not Spaniards?"

"We have come here from France," I replied.

"In France a man doth not suffer because of his religion." This he said like one asking a question.

"Neither doth everyone swear by the Mass," I answered at a venture.

"Ah!" he cried eagerly. "But there is danger."

"Why?"

"The woman is my own sister, and although she hath so far escaped the Inquisition, it may be that a new search will begin any day. I have heard that the priests commence again, and that right soon. I am a Moor," he continued, after a pause.

After some amount of parley with the man, we agreed to let him take us to his sister's house, which he did; and although the place was poor enough, it suited our purpose, for no one asked us questions, while food and drink were provided without grumbling.

Here we stayed three days without aught happening. We asked as many questions as we dared, but nothing did we discover concerning the Señora de Valencia or her tiring woman, Esther Truscott. It is true we learnt that many heretics would soon suffer the penalty of their sins, if they did not at once repent and believe, and that among those who would die "for the glory of God" were certain English, who had long been obdurate; but beyond that we could learn nothing of importance. I say we had asked as many questions as we dared, but this was not many, for the reasons which I have given.

This, however, we had done, and to it we owed, I think, something of our safety. We had each clothed ourselves in Spanish attire, and could thus walk abroad without attracting attention. It was long before I could persuade

John Trenoweth to do this ; but, our apparel being much soiled during our journey, we were obliged to obtain new, and, as that in the Spanish fashion was all that was available, we had to be content.

At the close of the third day the brother of the woman with whom we had lodged came to us much excited.

" Dark days are coming to us," he said.

" Why ? " I asked.

" The Inquisition is to be in force again," he replied " To-morrow the Archbishop is to preach in the cathedral and it is freely said that he will proclaim against unbelievers."

" But thou art a believer," I said.

" I may not speak as to that," he replied. " But this I know : heretics are to be searched out, and the movement is to begin by a sermon to-morrow."

I had noticed during the day that a number of priests had come as if from long journeys, and that a look of great eagerness was on nearly every man's face. I said nothing to the Moor, however, although he remained long, telling me scraps of news he had heard. When he had gone, and we were alone, I told Mawgan and John what he had said, which, as may be imagined, excited them much.

" I will go to the cathedral," I said.

" So will I," said Mawgan.

" But not I," said John Trenoweth. " I will not be a witness to blasphemy."

The next morning Mawgan and I found our way to the great church, where we saw that a great multitude had gathered, and where the air seemed heavy with the atmosphere of momentous deeds.

CHAPTER XII

I HEAR THE ARCHBISHOP'S SERMON AND SEE SEÑOR TOLEDO

I SAY a vast multitude had gathered in the cathedral, while a steady stream of people kept entering on every side, so that we were steadily forced towards the high altar. And this in spite of the fact that it was yet early. No preacher had as yet entered the pulpit, although prayers were being said, and the sound of chanting was heard in various parts of the building. Although the weather was warm outside, and a great concourse of people had gathered within, the cathedral was very cold, so that I gladly gathered my cloak around me. And here let me say that, for pure grandeur, I have never seen this cathedral surpassed. That which may be seen in Seville is larger, but for perfect harmony of proportion and colouring, the cathedral at Toledo surpasses almost anything I have ever set my eyes upon. Our St. Paul's, in London, is but poor when compared with it, neither does it possess the power to create that atmosphere of awe and mystery which pervades this great building in Spain. Especially did we feel this when at length we found ourselves, as it were, in the very centre of the building, in full view of the high altar on the one hand, and the stalls which contained the choir on the other.

Here, moreover, most of the people were kneeling, though not all. For this I was thankful; otherwise Mawgan and I would have been singled out, and regarded with suspicion. As we became accustomed to our surroundings, we were able to take particular note of those amongst whom we stood, and presently I saw, kneeling close beside me, one who chained my attention from the first. This was a young woman who, as I judged, could not be more than twenty years of age. What drew my attention to her was, I think, the fact that she was different from the rest who kneeled around. Her face was not cast in the Spanish mould, although she was evidently a Spaniard. I noticed, in spite of the fact that her head was partially covered by a peculiar kind of lace headgear, that her hair was not coarse and black like that of other Spanish women; rather it was fine and glossy, and, although it was very dark, there was a golden gleam in it. Her face, too, was not large and fleshy like those of the others, but of a more delicate nature, more

like our high-born English women. And this was not all. Although she was kneeling, I judged she was taller and more slender than her fellow-worshippers.

I stood some time watching her, while Mawgan gazed round the great church. Presently she looked up, and our eyes met, and it was at that moment that I saw a face, the memory of which will never pass from me, even though I live to the age which the Bible hath it men lived before the great flood. And yet I cannot describe it, for it was, as it seemed to me, full of contradictions. That it was beautiful no man could deny, and yet it was the beauty of pride and disdain, rather than of sweetness and tenderness. But here again my pen falters, for while I write the words I remember that she made me think of my mother. And how could that be, if there were not in her heart something akin to the heart of the woman who had sent me away with her blessing? For their faces were not alike. My mother's eyes were grey and soft as those of a dove, while the eyes of this maid were well-nigh black, and flashed into mine with a suggestion of passion.

As our eyes met, too, I saw the blood mount her cheeks, which added to her charm, and made my heart flutter somewhat, although I could not tell why. It was only a single glance we gave each other, but I knew then that I should know her again—aye, and I was sure, too, that I had seen one I could never forget. Not that she made me feel kindly towards her. Rather my heart grew hard and bitter. Although I thought of her and my mother together, she made me feel that she was my enemy, and that at no time could she be my friend.

Presently she, with the other worshippers, stood up, and then I saw that she was much taller than the ordinary Spanish woman, who for the most part is short and thick-set, moving somewhat clumsily, and with heavy footsteps. She, I say, was taller than the rest; moreover, she was more finely formed, and as she looked round she seemed like a queen, so stately and commanding was she.

She did not turn her eyes towards me again, although I could swear she looked at me from time to time out of the corners of her eyes, as though I interested her more than the crowd of Spanish *caballeros* by which we were surrounded. In truth, I was vain enough to think that this was owing to my great height (for I could give six inches to any man I saw there), or perhaps it might have been that my face was fresh and ruddy, and my brown hair was fine and curly, rather than stiff and straight like the Spaniards.

A little later, however, my attention was diverted from her, for the Archbishop entered the pulpit and began to preach, and, as the occasion was big with importance, I listened with all the ears I had. And this it was necessary for me to do, for although I knew the Spanish tongue enough to converse therein, I found that listening to a discourse was a different matter. Many strange words were used, and because the sentences were long and involved, I had to pay great heed or I should have missed their meaning.

He began, I remember, by glorifying what he called "the one true Church," and spoke both in sorrow and anger of the heresy which had crept into her. He said that the Church had been kind and tender towards unbelievers, and not until heretics had refused to listen to reason had she exercised her power and used stronger means. From time to time, moreover, even in the midst of these acts, she had relaxed her severity and given sinners every opportunity to repent. But he grieved that this had been in vain; nay, the very gentleness of the Church had been used as an excuse for disobedience, and heretics had become day by day more stubborn. He grieved that one whole nation had gone away into lasciviousness and debauchery, even in spite of the fact that the Pope had during the reign of a gentle daughter of Christ and most Christian Queen taken his curse of excommunication from her, and given her his blessing. He referred to Mary, the late beloved wife of His Most Gracious Majesty Philip II.

"And now," he said, his voice swelling with passion, "that nation hath become apostate. She hath resisted all those efforts of Mary, and her faithful ministers, Bishop Gardiner and Bishop Bonner, to bring them back to the faith; nay, her people have even called these men by vile and hateful names. And, still worse, for more than twenty years she hath allowed herself to be governed by a she-wolf, a spawn of that vile Henry VIII., who sold his soul to gratify his carnal passions. But this must not be. Spain, the faithful child of the Church, must restore England to her rightful King, our own sovereign, King Philip; she must cast that she-wolf into her filthy den, and bring back the people to those loving arms, without which England must be for ever accursed. Already hath his Holiness the Pope made that faithful and devoted churchman Father Allen a cardinal, and promised him the see of Canterbury. Cardinal Allen is also named Legate for England, and hath written his pastoral letter, which I will proceed to read to you."

Thereupon he read a letter which was written to the

English people. This purported that retribution was not to fall so much upon the English people as upon the usurping heretic Elizabeth, the bane of Christendom, and the murderess of the souls of her subjects. Henry VIII., tyrant as he was, had fallen short in atrocity of his infamous daughter. Vengeance would fall on her at last. Ruin was now to overwhelm her, and the just of the earth would say, "Lo! this is she who took not God for her strength, and was struck down by the hand of the Most High." Elizabeth had overthrown the Church, profaned the sacraments, and torn God's priests from the altars in the very act of celebrating the holy mysteries. She had made England a sanctuary of atheists and rebels, and vampire-like she had enriched herself by sucking the blood of afflicted Catholics. Her chief favourite had murdered his wife, and him she had made her principal Minister.

After this the letter went on to call her the foulest of reprobates, and her Court the vilest of hells. The Church had excommunicated her, but she had despised correction, and now the time had come for vengeance. She must be overthrown, and the sty which England had become must be purified.*

"And who is to do this?" said the Archbishop. "It is we, my children; it is we who must hurl this infamous creature from her high place. We, the children of Spain, must rid the people of England from this great tyrant!"

As he said these things, my heart became more and more aflame with anger. I found my hand on my sword hilt, and had not Mawgan spoken to me I believe I should have cried out.

"What is the matter?" said Mawgan Killigrew in a low voice. "You look as though you are going mad!"

"Mad!" I cried. "The man is blaspheming; he is calling our Queen vile names; he says our English Court is a hell."

"Then cry against him!" said Mawgan. "As sure as I am a Killigrew I will stand by thee!"

But at this time I looked and saw that the Spanish maid, of whom I have been telling, was watching us, and I could swear by the look on her face that she understood what we had said. This moved me to caution, and, pressing Mawgan's arm, I bade him be silent.

As far as I could judge, no one else regarded us, so, turning towards the pulpit, I again listened to the sermon.

* The above is a summary of Cardinal Allen's letter, much of which is unfit for publication.—J. H.

"Not only is the true faith being destroyed in England," he said, "but it is threatened in Spain. Even our own city of Toledo, beloved of God as she is, is the home of heresy. From time to time we have put down unbelief with a firm hand, but the vipers of unfaith have bred other vipers, until we can do no other than seek to destroy them all. The Holy Inquisition hath in these days been given power, and we must use it. To-day I give solemn warning from this sacred place that no unbelievers shall live in our see; the faith of every man and woman shall be inquired into, and the unrepentant shall suffer the penalty of their sins. Already is the Holy Council dealing with those who persist in the sin of unbelief, and we must continue our work until it is destroyed root and branch. And think not, my brethren, that we act in anger or in harshness. Nay, we act in love and pity. The Lord loveth whom He chasteneth, and the fires of the Church are lit in holy faith and tenderness. The body is nothing—the soul is all; therefore must we, if there be need, destroy the body that the soul may be saved."

This was in substance the sermon that I heard that Sabbath morning beneath the cathedral roof, and, as I have said, it aroused me to a mighty anger, and I had to strive with myself that I might be kept from proclaiming this man a liar and a false prophet.

But I did not speak, for as he finished his sermon I again looked towards the Spanish maid, and saw that her eyes were fixed on me. I believed, too, that she read what was in my mind, and was angry with me.

"Let us go out," I whispered to Mawgan. "Presently there will be the elevation of the Host, at which every Catholic will kneel, and, if we do not kneel with the rest, attention will be drawn to us."

So we found our way with others out of the cathedral, and presently stood in the Plaza de Ayuntamiento, which was a small square, and where we could speak together freely.

As well as I could I told Mawgan what the Archbishop had said, and watched him while his face grew redder and redder with anger.

"And we can do nothing!" he cried. "Oh, God, nothing!"

"We have come here to save the Señora de Valencia," I said, "and we will!"

"Give me your hand on that," cried Mawgan. "But we must fight warily. It is a marvel to me that we have not already been haled before these fellows."

As we stood there two Spaniards passed us, and as they passed we heard one say :

" The Council meets to-morrow, I hear."

" Aye, at El Cristo de la Vega. Methinks the Christ's arm will not move."

" Nay, that it will not. Even though it moved for a Jew, it will not for an Englishwoman, and a serving woman to boot. Why, report hath it she hath called the Inquisitors devils."

" Aye, I can well believe it. These English, since the she-wolf cub, Elizabeth, hath been Queen, care for naught, and believe in naught. Still the priests be getting mighty arrogant. It is said that even the King is afraid of them."

" Tush, man ! and speak not loud. The search begins to-morrow, and every idle word will be remembered."

" Rupert Hamstead," said Mawgan, when I told him what they had said, " three days have we been in Toledo, and yet have we done naught. We have not yet discovered the señora's dwelling-place."

" Aye, but no harm is happening to her," I replied ; " when heretics suffer they suffer in public."

" When they be burnt, aye ; but what of their imprisonment—what of torture ? "

" Let us move on," I whispered. " I believe we be watched."

Accordingly we walked slowly across the square, I looking furtively on a man who, as I believed, was keeping near to us. And what aroused my suspicions about him was, not so much the fact that he kept near to us, as the man's appearance. I remembered my father's description of Señor Toledo, and thought I recognised him. It is true nearly thirty years must have passed since my father saw him ; nevertheless, what he wrote held good even then. The closely placed eyes, the narrow shoulders, the thin legs, the nervous springy movement—all corresponded with what my father had written concerning him.

" Who watches us ? " asked Mawgan.

" I believe it is Señor Toledo," I replied.

I saw Mawgan's lips close as if by a snap, but he kept himself from doing aught rash, and presently, as the man walked away, I breathed again.

" He looks well-nigh seventy," said Mawgan.

" No bite is as bad as an old dog's bite," I said.

" And he looks as though his fangs are sharp," replied Mawgan ; " but let us get back to Trenoweth, and, by Cormoran, we must be careful we be not followed."

" Not yet," I replied. " Look, the people be coming

out" ; and I made my way towards the great door at the western end.

For some minutes I watched, but no one interested me ; presently, however, my heart leaped within me, for, passing through the doorway, I saw the maid whom I had noticed during the sermon.

Whether she saw us or no, I cannot tell, for although she looked not towards me, I thought I saw her eyes flash, and her face flush as if with anger.

"Who is that beauteous lady ?" I said to a young Spaniard who stood by my side, nodding towards her.

"The Señorita de Valencia," he replied.

"Ah ! she comes from Valencia ?" I said carelessly, although God knows I spoke with a fast-beating heart.

"Aye, and no," he replied. "Her father's family were of Valencia originally, but the lands came not to him. He was of Toledo, and lived here."

"Does he not live here now ?"

"You cannot know Toledo, señor," he replied, "or you would have heard of his death, some little time ago. He married an English heretic, who was forgiven her heresy for his sake, but now that he is dead she hath fallen under suspicion. Indeed, report hath it that she is closely imprisoned, and her time of repentance is fast coming to an end."

"And the señorita, is she a heretic ?"

"Nay, by the Mass, no. She hateth her mother's sin, and some say her mother also. But that may not be. She hath but lately come from a convent, and since her father's death hath but seldom seen the señora. But the señorita is as much a Catholic as the Queen after whom she is named."

"What, Isabella ?"

"Aye, Isabella, that is her name, and report hath it that she abets the priests in their determination to bring her mother to the stake if she will not repent. It is hard to believe, but she is half English, and hath a temper."

"Lives she with her mother ?"

"Nay, since her father's death she hath been placed in charge of the Archbishop's counsellor and his secretary, Señor Toledo."

"And he is, of course, a strong supporter of the Church ?"

The young Spaniard shrugged his shoulders.

"*Sabe Dios*," he replied. "This, I know : Señor Toledo is for himself. He hath great power, and so men fear him, but no man loveth him."

"What is he like ?"

"Like an eel, señor, long and narrow; aye, but a serpent would be a better simile, for he hath the tooth of one—aye, and the strength of one, too."

"And lives he near the Archbishop's palace?"

"Nay, but in the white palace at the east of the Alcazar."

"Come," I said to Mawgan, when the young Spaniard had departed, "let us hie to our lodging-place. But we must watch, man, we must watch."

"Have you heard aught?"

"Much," I replied, "but we must be wary."

We made our way through the crowd, and for the first time in my life I grieved because of my height; for, being of great stature, I could be singled out with ease. And this was also true of Mawgan, and especially was it true among the Spaniards. For they be a short, squat race, very few of them rising to anywhere near six feet in height. Still, we mingled freely with them, and when presently we left the open space we took as many turns as a hunted fox, darting up one narrow street and down another, and thus going a long distance before we reached the Calle del Refugio.

Arrived there, we had a long council of war, for I told John Trenoweth and Mawgan Killigrew all I had heard.

"As for this Isabella, we have naught to do with her," said John Trenoweth. "Sir John Tremayne's daughter we will save, if God gives us grace, and my Esther must be saved, too. Remember that, my masters!"

This he had said many times, and became half-mazed because we had not yet discovered where she was.

Our dangers, too, were increased—or, at least, so I feared. For I could not help believing that the man I had seen was Señor Toledo; and, if that were so, we walked on a sword edge. Men told me I bore a strong likeness to my father; indeed, some went so far as to say that I was the exact image of what Sir Richard Hamstead had been when he was twenty-four. If that were so, Señor Toledo would have recognised me in spite of my Spanish attire, and would make his plans accordingly.

But we had not come to Spain without counting on this, and we walked Toledo streets both that day and the next, seeking as best we could to find the prison of the Señora de Valencia. In this, however, we were unsuccessful; but on the Tuesday morning the Moor came to us, his eyes fairly ablaze with excitement.

"It hath begun, my lords!" he cried.

"What hath begun?"

"The Inquisition. To-day at noon, in the Circo Romano, an Englishwoman is to be burned."

"Who? The Señora de Valencia?"

"Nay, that is not her name. She hath been her tiring woman."

But this I did not tell John Trenoweth, for, in truth, I was afraid to do so.

"It was so decided at El Cristo de la Vega yesterday, and even now the people hath gathered in the Church of San Juan de los Reyes."

"Come," I said to my companions, "it is said that an English heretic is to be burned. Come!"

"Where?" cried Mawgan and Trenoweth in the me breath.

"At the Circo Romano," I replied, "but they are even now in the Church of St. John of the Kings."

At this, both Mawgan and John Trenoweth looked to their weapons, and then we three walked away together. No word spoke we, for I believe that their mouths were hot and dry, even as mine was. And yet my heart beat not more quickly than was its wont, while my sinews seemed like steel.

But I did not know then of what I should see and hear before the sun went down.

CHAPTER XIII

SNATCHED FROM THE FLAMES

I HAVE said that my heart beat not more quickly than was its wont, and I have spoken the truth. Instead of being well-nigh crazed, as I had imagined I should be under such circumstances, a great calm came over me. I took more than ordinary note of the people we passed in the streets, as well as of the buildings, which were larger than ordinary. I remember how in particular I paid attention to a building which had had a strange history, being at one time a Jewish temple, and again a Moorish mosque, but which was at that time a Christian church called Santa Maria la Blanca, and I remember, too, wondering why it was called the Church of the White Mary. Not only this, but when at length I came to the Church of San Juan de los Reyes, I took particular note of the chains which were festooned in front of the building.

I knew that within that same church prayers were being chanted, prior to leading a heretic victim down the steep incline, and across to the Circo Romano, which stood on the plain outside the city walls. But, somehow, the thought seemed to fill me with a kind of unnatural calm. Indeed, I asked one of the crowd which stood on the little space outside the church door what the chains meant.

"They be the chains which were taken from the Christians whom the Moors kept in their dungeons," replied the man.

"And who put them there?"

"The señor must be a stranger to Toledo, or he would know," he replied: "it was by the orders of Isabella the Catholic. Aye, and by the Mass, she made the Moors suffer for it afterwards. Good fuel they were, too, these dogs who followed the false prophet."

"And who is to be burnt to-day?" I asked with seeming carelessness.

"Aye, I know not. Some say one thing, and some another; there be several, I think, and among them an English heretic."

"Go you to see the burning?"

"What would you?" cried the man. "We have not had one for many a week, and think you I will miss this

chance ? The saints know that of late there hath been but little interest in life. The Inquisition falls hard on the heretics, but, as Padre Antonio said to me yesterday, it provides a rare spectacle for the people. I would not miss it for a Dutch ducat."

"Why go you not inside the church ?"

"Aye, there is no sport there. The priests are mumbling prayers, and giving exhortation ; but what of that ? True, I would like to hear Padre Tempestad tell those poor devils of heretics how they will burn in hell, for he hath a rare gift. I heard him once describe the sufferings of a heretic in hell, and as he told of his endeavours to scrape away the boiling pitch from his roasting body, even I felt sick. But the prayers will be long, and the sermon short to-day, so I prefer waiting here, and seeing the procession start. Besides, the church is full, and I doubt whether I could gain admission."

And this I found to be true ; for when I and my companions tried to obtain an entrance, we saw only a seething mass of people, who whispered one to another so loudly as to almost drown the chanting of the priests.

"It's a fine day," I heard a man say close beside me, "and there is no wind."

"Aye, and the dried olive wood will burn well."

"Green wood would be better sport."

"Aye, but that is over-cruel, according to my thinking."

"Think you she will last ?"

"What mean you ?"

"It is a good mile walk from here to the Circo Romano, and it is said she hath been put to the torture. If so, I doubt whether she can walk so far."

"Aye, especially when she knows she is walking to hell."

"Not so. These English heretics think they go straight to heaven."

"What, unshriven ?'

"They care not for that."

"Well, I am a good Catholic, but these be strange doings. It is these Jesuits who are at the back of it all. Report hath it that it is the English Jesuit priest who hath stirred up the Inquisition again."

"Aye, so I have heard. Whenever they have power, the fires burn. But what would you ? She is English, and they defy us. They, the beer-drinking swine, have sacked our towns, and defied our arms, and, therefore, they must be punished. Even the Dutch resistance is naught to theirs.

I would that the Armada started to-morrow instead of next year. But what would you? The King waits for the Pope's money, and therefore, there is delay. But *patienza* I will touch the English gold!"

"And so will I, for I am selected to go. But look you, they be coming."

In this he spoke the truth; for at that moment the great church doors rolled back, the people rushed out, while the dismal chanting sounded more plain.

I looked at my companions, who gave a low cry as the great bell in the tower began to toll a funeral knell, and I saw that each face was stern and set. Mawgan had lost all his ruddy colour, and had become as pale as a Spaniard; but this was not with fear. Nay, I knew by the gleaming of his eyes, and the firm setting of his jaws, that his heart was on fire, even as mine was. John Trenoweth, too, looked almost ghastly. In truth, his face was the face of a corpse rather than of a living man; but his eyes gleamed with that steely glitter which I had always noted when he was much wrought upon.

He did not cry out, nor become frantic as I feared he would. I could hear him breathing heavily, however, as though his lungs closed against the air, while he kept on muttering the words, "The hell hounds! the hell hounds!"

A minute later a great silence fell upon us all, for the grim procession began.

First came two men bearing a carved figure of our Lord upon the cross, after which came some ecclesiastics headed by the archbishop, all of whom wore gorgeous robes, which nevertheless bore signs of mourning upon them; and after these came a number of priests of less degree, followed by many boys, who carried flags and other things, the meaning of which I could not understand. After these again came a man of great stature and commanding mien, but who made me shudder as I looked on him. He, too, was an ecclesiastic, and wore rich robes, but he was not joining in the dismal chanting which filled the air with sadness. I watched him as his eyes swept over the crowd, eyes which made one think of darkness and mystery, so deep and stern were they.

Then followed a man with a rough wooden cross,* at which a sound like a groan rose from the vast multitude, for immediately behind it came the victims, or what we thought were the victims. Their faces we could not discern, for

* This wooden cross may still be seen in the church of San Juan de los Reyes.—J. H.

they were covered with a death mask, neither were the outlines of their bodies plain, on account of the long coarse robes which enveloped them. But we could see that two out of the four were lame, and stumbled along with difficulty; and this was, doubtless, partly because the road was rough and uneven, and partly because their limbs ached after their torture.

Who followed after the victims I know not, for Mawgan and John Trenoweth and I kept close to them, or at least as close as we could, for we could not walk by their sides because of the soldiers who formed a barrier.

Down the hill went the priests, and others, chanting the death chant, until we came to the Puerta Cambron, which, like the other great doors, was a tremendous barrier made of wood and iron, but which did not swing on hinges, but was drawn up and down in a rude socket. And after this we crossed a rough piece of ground passing not far from El Cristo de la Vega, where the victims had been condemned the day before, and where I was destined to realise one of the most wonderful experiences which surely ever fell to the lot of man. A little distance from here we struck into a rude road which led to the Circo Romano, a large level piece of ground encircled by the ruins of thick stone walls. This place, I was told, had once been a Roman amphitheatre, for the people had it that Toledo was the oldest city in the world, and that the Romans ruled the city long centuries before Wamba conquered it. Be that as it may, it was now used as a place for burning heretics, and already I saw in the near distance grim piles of wood.

It was at this time that the terror of the whole business really got hold of me, for up to now the thought that I should see any living human being committed to the flames had not really possessed me. I had, as it seemed to me, been living through a black nightmare, but now the terror of it all entered my soul, and such a fear laid hold of my heart as I have never felt either before or since.

To the right stood Toledo on its lofty heights, grim, awful, mysterious, forbidding; on the left was the church of El Cristo de la Vega, behind which was an undulating country, green with olive trees. In front was a plain, through which the tawny waters of the Tagus ran, presently to enter the great gorge which nearly encircled the city.

The day was fine. Not a cloud hung in the sky, not a breath of wind stirred. All around, save for the olive trees which appeared on the hills behind the little church, was a parched, sterile country. Not a bird sang, and not a sound

was heard save the dismal chanting of the priests, the tolling of the great bell, and the distant shriek of a buzzard.

The flippant talk which I had heard a little while before had ceased. In truth, these Spaniards, cruel as they were, and always had been—aye, and laughing at their cruelty, too—had now become quiet and subdued. Perchance the awful thought that human beings were to be burnt alive made them think of the meaning of it all. For no charges were brought against the victims save that they did not accept the beliefs of their Church. Perhaps the more thoughtful of them wondered whether He Who took the little children in His arms and blessed them would have given His blessing to the decisions of the tribunal which had condemned them to this.

Be that as it may, no man spoke, and when we reached the stakes and the faggots, and the priests stopped chanting the funeral dirge, the silence was that of the night rather than of the day.

Presently a man stepped upon a kind of pulpit. Who he was, or what position he held, I knew not; neither do I know his name, even to this day. He began chanting something in the Latin tongue, which I did not understand. This he continued a minute or more, during which the crowd uncovered their heads. When he had finished there was a moment's respite, for the priests spoke to each other, and even the people began to whisper.

"I would a dagger were put through them instead," I heard one say.

"Tush, man!" replies another. "Tush, man! You know it must not be. It is a law that no blood must be shed—nay, not even a drop. But listen."

At this the man who stood on the platform began to speak. I will not write down all he said, for it makes me sick to think of it, and this was no wonder, seeing he spoke of the love of the Mother Church, and of the glory of God. After this one of the victims was brought forward. A Jew I took him to be when first the mask was torn from his face, and I soon found that I was right; for the man spoke harsh words to him. He told him that his fathers had crucified Christ, and that ever since they had been an accursed race. That still the Holy Inquisition had been kind to him, giving him opportunities of life, if he would forswear his naughtiness, but he, being stiff-necked and sinful, had defied the servants of God. After this a woman was brought forward, and as her face was uncovered my heart stood still, for I was sure that she was the daughter of Sir John Tremayne. Her face was pale and drawn as if by much suffering, her

lips were bloodless, while her forehead looked like a piece of polished bone.

"Anne de Valencia," the man said, "I still call thee by that name, and perhaps for the last time, for after this day if thou dost not repent, thou shalt no longer be regarded as the widow of Don Basilio Fernandio de Valencia, but thou shalt be an outcast bearing thy maiden name, Tremayne. To thee the Church hath shown great mercy. Thou shalt not die to-day. Thou art brought here that thou mayst be warned, after which thou shalt have further days for repentance. So kind are we to thee that thou shalt witness the burning of thy tiring woman, Esther Truscott, who hath, like thee, been obdurate, refusing the Church's love, and denying her doctrines. It is our hope that our clemency will at once melt thine heart, and at the same time be to thee a warning."

"It is Mistress Mary—it is she we came to save!" I heard John Trenoweth say. "What says he, Master Hamstead?"

"Hush, man," I said; "she is not to be burned to-day," but I did not tell him what had been said concerning Esther Truscott, although my silence scarcely spared him at all, as will speedily be seen. For no sooner had the man ceased speaking to Mistress Tremayne, than the death mask was torn from the face of the other victim, and I saw the features of a kindly faced woman, who looked as though she was well past mid age, although I was not quite sure. That she was an Englishwoman I could not doubt for a moment, for hers was a face that could not belong to any Spaniard, so strongly was it stamped with the stamp of her country. This I saw in a moment, and just as I turned to look at John Trenoweth, wondering if he recognised her as his sweetheart, the priest pronounced her name: Esther Truscott.

But not a word more did he say, for John Trenoweth passed through the people as easy as a man might pass through a field of standing wheat. Not a word spoke he, although on his face was a look such as I had never seen before. Love, terror, hatred, vengeance, determination, all were there, and it seemed as though those around were moved by his presence, for no man molested him.

Before a man could well count five, John Trenoweth had reached the condemned woman, and stood before her with his arms outstretched. But the woman moved not, although her eyes were wide open with fear, as if she had seen a ghost.

"Esther, my beauty, my deear sweetheart!" he said,

and I noted the Cornish accent; I noted, too, the tenderness of his voice.

As he spoke the woman's eyes changed, and a look of joy swept over her face; such a look as I have seen on the face of a young mother when she hath clasped her babe to her breast.

"John! John!" she cried. "You be come then! Forgive me, John, for I loved 'ee all the time!"

At this she made a movement to come to him, while the Archbishop and priests watched with wide-open eyes, but two soldiers held her fast.

Then, as it seemed to me, in less time than it takes a clock to tick twice, John Trenoweth caught hold of the two soldiers, one in each hand, and threw them from her, with less trouble than it would have caused me to throw aside two seven-year-old children. Then while a cry of excitement rose from the crowd they fell into each other's arms.

"Esther, my beauty, my lovely maid!" I heard him say, while she kept on repeating, "John, my John! thank God you've come to me!"

But this was only for a moment, for the soldiers rose to their feet, and made ready to rush upon them, and at this neither Mawgan Killigrew nor I could restrain ourselves longer. With drawn swords we rushed to their side; and each made a circle of steel around us. For some minutes—how many I know not—we fought like tigers. Man after man fell around us, while again and again did soldiers come towards us, and again and again did we drive them back.

Once, and once only, did I look at Mawgan Killigrew, and even now, it makes my heart warm to think of him, as I saw him then. His cloak had dropped from his shoulders, and his head was bare. But this all the better revealed his kind, honest face and sinewy form. Mawgan Killigrew was worth seeing at any time, so straight and lithe was he. Even during the few hours I had been in Cornwall, I had heard him spoken of as the finest man in the county. And this I think not without reason, for not only was he of great height, and largeness of limb, but he carried himself with grace and dignity. His face, too, was not one to forget, rather it was one to be thankful for, revealing as it did nobleness of thought, honesty of purpose. That day, however, he seemed crowned with a new glory; the joy of battle was in his eyes—eyes which shone like flames of fire—and he wielded his sword as though it were of featherweight.

His voice rang out clear and true, too, as time after time a man fell, and he gathered himself together for a fresh attack.

How long we fought, I repeat, I do not know. Sometimes I think our struggle must have lasted many minutes; at others, however, I imagine it must have been but a few seconds. For we were but two, and they were a numberless crowd. How then could the battle be long?

"Tear them asunder!" I heard them saying again and again, while others made answer, "We cannot."

"Then cut them asunder."

"It must not be. No blood must be shed. The Holy Inquisition forbids the shedding of blood."

This I heard while Mawgan Killigrew and I fought those who sought to tear John Trenoweth from the arms of the woman he had come to save.

But the end came presently. How could it be otherwise, when we were but two swords against a crowd, which became angrier and angrier each minute? I saw Mawgan borne to the ground, just as I have been told that even a lion is overcome by a pack of jackals, and at the same moment my own arms were pinioned.

"Now tear them asunder," cried a voice, "but break no bones, nor shed no blood."

But that they could not do. John Trenoweth's arms were around the body of the woman he loved, and the infuriated mob could not separate them.

What the end would have been I know not; nor, indeed, dare I think, but at that moment a young priest rushed into the crowd waving a letter above his head.

"From the King!" he cried, "from the King."

CHAPTER XIV

THE VISIT OF SEÑOR TOLEDO

NO sooner had he spoken than the turmoil ceased. A look of expectation filled every eye, and a moment of breathless silence reigned.

The Archbishop took the letter, and scanned it eagerly

"The English heretic is to be given further time for repentance," he said. "The King's will be done!" and at this there was a shout, partly of relief, and partly, as I thought, of disappointment from the multitude.

"Take them back to prison," said the Archbishop, "and let further means be taken to bring her to repentance."

"But what of the men!" cried a voice. "What of the English devils which we have here?"

"To the dungeons with them," said a voice.

"Aye, to prison with them," said the Archbishop. "They be evidently spies and heretics. They must be taken to prison, and tried."

"But we cannot separate the man from the woman!"

"Drive a dagger into his heart!"

At this moment I saw John Trenoweth's danger. Through the sea of faces I saw him straining the woman to his breast. His face was no longer pale, nor were his eyes hard and cruel. In truth, I believe he did not realise all that was going on around him. Only one thought filled his mind. He held his sweetheart to his breast, and was content.

"John," I said, "John Trenoweth," and the crowd was silent as I spoke.

"Aye, Master Hamstead."

"She is not to die to-day. A letter hath come from the King commanding that she have further time for repentance."

"Aye, do 'ee 'ear that, my beauty?" says John to the woman.

"You must be separated, John," I said.

"Never, never!" he cried.

"It will be better, John. If you do not let her go, they will stab you to the heart, and then you will no longer be able to protect her. God hath helped us so far, and He

will again! If you release her now, we will find some means to accomplish our plans."

Whether any man understood our speech I know not; neither, in truth, did I think at that moment, so much wrought upon was I. I believe then, as I believe now, that God in His good providence had guided us, and that He would guide us still further. I think, too, although my words were necessarily few, that John Trenoweth understood what was in my heart, for he kissed Esther Truscott tenderly, and said, "They shall not keep me from 'ee long, my dear, for the Lord hath delivered 'ee from the lion's mouth."

After that I had little idea what happened, for I seemed to fall into a kind of dreamy condition. It seemed as though all through which I had gone had dulled my senses; but I have a vague memory of having my hands bound, and of being led away from the Circo Romano towards the city. I do not think any great crowd went with us, for, as I was told afterwards, the people stayed behind to see the Jew burnt, desiring rather to see his sufferings than to behold three Englishmen led away into captivity.

When we had passed through the Puerta Cambron, I remember wondering whether we should all be put in the same prison, or whether each man would have a solitary cell. But I asked no questions, for my brain was dull, and I could not think clearly.

Presently I found myself in darkness. The air was cool, too, although ill-smelling. Little by little my senses came back to me, and, feeling a pain in my head, I put my hand on the place where it ached most. Then I realised that I had been wounded, for it was wet with blood. At some little distance I heard a hum of voices, but the sound was not distinct, and then I think I fell asleep, for I remember nothing else for a long time.

"Wake up and eat, señor!"

I started up, and saw a Spaniard before me, and then, looking around, I found myself in an ill-lighted room.

"Where am I!" I asked.

"Under the Alcazar," was the reply.

"All right, Rupert, we are here too." It was Mawgan who spoke, and the sound of his voice caused a sensation of joy to pass through my heart.

"Have I been ill?"

"You had a sword cut on your head, but it was not bad."

"And we are all together?"

"Aye. I hear we are to be visited, and the Spanish

señors, who, I suppose, are to be our visitors, will not go to the filthy den where they put us first."

"But how did you find that out?"

"A fellow has been to us who speaks English."

"Who speaks English?"

"Aye."

Again I looked around me, and I saw that we were not so badly housed as I feared we should be. It is true that the place was neither more nor less than a dungeon; nevertheless, a ray of light penetrated the gloom from an iron grating placed in the wall, while on the floor was a thick litter of straw, which, as far as I could see, was clean.

The food brought was of a coarse and unsavoury nature, but hunger had come to me, so I fell to eating ravenously. After I had eaten I felt better. Some sour wine, too, although anything but pleasant, slaked my thirst, and made me feel something like my own man again. By-and-by the Spaniard left us, so that we could speak freely.

"We have saved my Esther, Master Hamstead," said John Trenoweth. "Had we not been there, she would have been committed to the flames before the man from the King arrived."

"Aye, and it was a glorious fight, too," said Mawgan almost joyfully. "I am willing to be cooped up in this hole, when I think of the way we slashed at those Spaniards. By Cormoran, Rupert, but thou knowest the tricks of sword-play."

"God, in His mercy, saved my Esther," said John Trenoweth. "She is alive, and she still loves me. Aye, and I have faith; the same God Who hath brought us together will help us still further. I feel it in my heart."

"But we are in prison," I could not help saying.

"In prison! But what of that? Esther is alive, my own little maid that was parted from me more than twenty years agone! If God helped us once, He will again!"

In truth, a great change had come over John Trenoweth. He seemed full ten years younger, and his voice rang out clearly, as though his heart was warm and joyful.

"I tell you God brought us here—aye, and He brought us in time, too. Could they tear me from her? Nay, not ten of them! They dragged, and dragged, but what of that? I held her in my arms. Aye, even although you had struck no blow for me, I would have held her, until the Lord brought deliverance."

Much as I feared the future, I would say no word to discourage him; neither, indeed, had I the right, for we had been wonderfully delivered. Still, I loved not the thought

of prison, and I wondered what was the meaning of the news which had been brought to Mawgan.

"The man who spoke English said we were to be visited?" I said to him. "But by whom?"

"Aye, that I know not. I have told you what he said to me. A Spanish lord, he said, could not go into the black, stinking den into which we were first thrust, so we were taken to better quarters."

"Aye, but who can be our visitors?" I asked aloud.

"Who cares?" cried John Trenoweth. "Even though they be the hell hounds of the Inquisition, I will not be afraid. The Lord will be our defence even here!"

At these words a great fear came into my heart, for I believed that he, unknowingly, had suggested the truth. We should be visited by the priests, and possibly should be put to torture. And the thought of this was terrible to me, for although I feared no man when my limbs were free, and I carried a good sword, I dreaded terribly the ghastly torments to which the Spaniards put English Protestants.

Presently the light which reached us through the iron grating passed away, from the which I gathered that night was upon us, whereupon we laid ourselves down on the straw, and after some time fell asleep. How long we slept I know not, but after a time I found myself wide awake, and possessed with a feeling that someone was near us. Why I thought this I know not, for all was still save the heavy breathing of Mawgan Killigrew and the low murmurings of John Trenoweth, who even in his sleep spoke of his "dear little maid."

"There's someone whispering," I thought at length, and, sitting up, I listened more intently.

Yes, there could be no doubt about it; there was a low murmuring at the door, and upon this I woke Mawgan Killigrew, who lay by my side.

"What is it?" he asked in a whisper.

"Someone is at the door," I said. "Listen, but do not make a noise."

At this John Trenoweth also awoke, and together we waited and listened.

Presently a gleam of light shot across the floor, and then little by little the door opened, as if by stealth, and a moment later two men came into the room. The one I saw in the twinkling of an eye was a priest of some sort. The other had so wrapped his face in his cloak that I could not discern his features. Nevertheless, I believed that I knew who he was. There was something in his move-

ments which reminded me of the man I had seen on the Sunday morning before, and made me think of my father's visit to Gloucester at the time when Master Hooper went to heaven in a flame of fire.

"What would you, señors?" I asked aloud, "and why is our rest disturbed?"

"Master Hamstead?" said the man in the cloak.

"To whom do you speak, señor?" I asked.

"To you," he replied. "You are Master Hamstead."

"And why should I be Master Hamstead?" I asked.

"Because my eyes never deceive me, old as they are"; and there was savage glee in the tones of his voice. "Because—because—well, never mind—I greet you, Master Hamstead, and, believe me, it grieves me much to see you here."

"And why should it grieve you?" I asked.

"Because your father was a brave man, and because—well, it will not be easy to get you away from here."

"You wish to get us out from here," cried Mawgan Killigrew eagerly.

"Else why should I be here? Believe me, I have been looking for you for many days."

I waited for him to continue.

"Believe me, the Spaniard is not ill served in England, and we know of all that takes place"; and he laughed pleasantly.

"You have been in England yourself," I ventured.

"Aye, long years ago. But *no me gusto*—that is, I like it not. Ah, the skies are gloomy, and the rain falls often. Not that there be not many green trees and fields, and many singing birds. But bah! the English know not how to live, or to love."

"But they know how to fight!" said Mawgan.

"Aye, Master Killigrew—you see, I know you—aye they know how to fight, but clumsily, clumsily. With a bludgeon they hit hard, but with a rapier—bah!"

"I would gladly contest the point with you," said Mawgan, rising to his feet. "Choose your own weapons, man, and let us have twelve square feet."

The man in the cloak laughed. "See my white hair," he said. "Ah, but I love other weapons than steel now; but time was when—but enough. Señors, I salute you!" and, taking off his hat, he revealed the features of the man I expected to see. It was Señor Toledo grown old: Señor Toledo in his own country, the man who my father said was as cunning as the devil, and as deep as the bottomless pit where he dwelt.

But I did not make out that I knew him. Moreover, I pressed Mawgan Killigrew's arms as a hint that he should be silent.

"Ah, yes," he went on. "I was in England in the good days of old. But I was unknown. Then what would you! I ate the beef, I drank the beer, I made love to the pretty women, and after breaking many hearts I returned to Spain. Señors, do you know that you be all mad?"

I shrugged my shoulders, even as a Spaniard might.

"Aye, mad," he repeated. "You came to take away Señora de Valencia and her serving woman. Ah! you start! The señora is the daughter of John Tremayne, and had she married according to his desires she would have been one of the richest women in England. Ah, yes! I know right well. I am what you call frank, free of speech, my masters—is it not so? That is why I desired speech with you. But you be mad. Think you that an Englishman can come to Spain—aye, and to Toledo!—and take away the señora as a hind could take a kitchen wench from one of your English houses? Ah, think you that? Think you we did not know that this man here, John Trenoweth!—ah, but your names are hard to utter—was not sent to Hamstead Manor—what for? How did I find out? *Sabe Dios!*"

That the man had something in his mind I knew right well. Else why should he seek speech with us? Why, moreover, should he tell us that he knew aught of our plans?

"Falmouth is a fine harbour," he went on. "Oh, I know! A fine harbour, and Master Killigrew governs it—Master Killigrew, hearty of manner and free of speech. How do I know it? My masters, there were friends of Spain in the neighbourhood of Arwenack before Señor Gomez went there. Why? *Sabe Dios!* Do I not speak freely according to your English desires?"

"Well," I cried, "and why all this?"

"Why? Ah, you speak as you fight, bluntly, clumsily, and——"

"Honestly."

He shrugged his shoulders scornfully.

"And you thought," he went on, "that we should be unprepared. You did not know that in England every parish has a friend of Spain. You did not know that there is not a vessel which leaves an English port but has someone who longs for Spanish rule, and who finds a means of sending news to us. You did not know that one of your own countrymen hath established such a system of espionage in England that aught that affects us is made known to us with

the speed of a bird's flight. Ah, but it gives us little pleasure to fight with you, you be so clumsy, so mad, so blind!"

At this I laughed—why I hardly know—but my laugh angered him.

"Oh, yes, Señor Gomez did not—but what of that? You are here in Toledo, and here you will stay. Remember, we Spaniards be no fools!" This he said angrily.

"He is trying to frighten me," I thought, but I held my tongue.

"You and yours should know better," he went on, "for you have had experience of the Spaniard."

"Aye, I have seen them run away," I said with another laugh.

He stamped his foot with rage, but presently he mastered himself.

"Well, what expect you?" he asked.

"I expect you to do your worst," I replied. "I expect you will try and treat us as your countrymen have always treated mine when they have had them in their power. I expect you will use the same means as you have used in the Indies—aye, and in your own country among the Moors, and Jews, and Christians. I know them. The torture, the faggot. There is nothing new in them. Clumsy and brutal, and, well—Spanish."

"Yes, my masters," he said between his teeth, "and what then?"

"Only that we shall beat you!" I cried.

"Beat us!"

"Aye, beat you." It was John Trenoweth who took up the tale. "You may do your worst, but we shall take Sir John Tremayne's daughter back to him, where she will be freed from your hellish tortures. We shall take back my Esther to Cornwall, Master Spaniard, and laugh at you for what you are—a cruel, blood-thirsty, Popish crew."

I thought he would have struck the Cornishman, but he restrained himself.

"A caballero may not soil his hands by touching swine," he said. Then, turning to me again, he continued:

"You think because you escaped from the gipsy camp, and because it seemed as though good fortune were on your side this morning, that you can escape us. But bah! I could have captured you a score of times these last two days. But I did not. Why? Because I was not ready. Besides——" And then he stopped suddenly while I waited for him to continue.

"I will tell you what will come to pass," he said at length. "You heard the sermon in the cathedral on

Sunday, so I need not enlarge on that. Well, in one day—perhaps two days—but quickly, you will be taken to El Cristo de la Vega, and your faith will be inquired into."

"Inquired into!" I repeated with a sneer.

"Aye, inquired into, for the Holy Inquisition never condemns before trial; and then, if you prove untrue to the doctrines of the Church, you will be put to torture. And I tell you the thumbscrew, the rack, be not pleasant."

"And afterwards?" I asked.

"Afterwards—well," and he shrugged his shoulders, "you will understand the secret which that dog of a Jew learnt to-day. The flames, señors, the flames!"

I was silent.

"You do not speak, señor."

"No, I am waiting."

"Waiting? For what, señor?"

"To know why you have come to visit us to-night."

"I have been to England," he said presently, "and therefore think not of the English as some think of them. They are fools, and blind—but all are not bad. Therefore—well, I might be disposed to be merciful to you."

Still I waited, never speaking a word.

CHAPTER XV

SEÑOR TOLEDO'S OFFER

"I REMEMBER that both you and Master Killigrew here be only mere boys, and therefore act but foolishly," he said, after quietly watching us for a few moments. "As for your serving man here—well, he can be dealt with later."

"He is no serving man," said Mawgan Killigrew. "His blood is as good as yours, señor, and he is as brave a man."

The Spaniard shrugged his shoulders again, but beyond this he took no notice of the interruption.

"Being mere thoughtless boys," he went on, "it doth seem hard that you should, well, let us say, be treated as the Jew was treated to-day. Nevertheless, you will be, if I do not interpose. It is true I shall place myself in opposition to the Holy Inquisition, but what of that? I am too old to be a suspect, besides, I have not lived so long in Toledo for naught. Be that as it may, I have decided to give you a chance of life."

"Thank you, señor," said Mawgan quietly. "Then I suppose we may walk out of here free men?"

The Spaniard showed his yellow teeth like one in anger.

"I was right in saying that Master Killigrew was only a boy," he said. "But bah! what would you?"

"You would make a bargain with us," I said.

"Señor Hamstead is an Englishman, and loves a bargain," said the Spaniard, "and—well, even Spanish caballeros love honest treaty. *Quid pro quo*, as the Latins say—is that not so, Señor Hamstead?"

"Well, what would you?" I asked, for I was impatient to know what he was driving at.

"You know what your life is worth here," he replied. "Let me take my hands from you, and what then? It grieves me to say it, but the Spaniard loves sport, and nothing would please him better than to see three English heretics roasting. But it would not please me. Would you believe me, I have spent much time in persuading the holy fathers to adopt another form of death. It is not pleasing to a man of refined tastes, it is—well, a trifle vulgar and brutish. A clean rapier thrust I love, but the flames, the

smell of roasting flesh—bah! But that is not to the point. The señors would like to go back to their island again. It is scarcely conceivable, but there—they were not born in Spain."

"Well," I said.

"Well, I have come to tell them of means whereby their wishes may be accomplished."

We remained silent, so the Spaniard went on.

"What I ask is that one of them, say Master Killigrew, shall write a letter at my dictation."

"To whom?"

"To Sir John Tremayne."

"And the purport thereof?"

"Oh, the purport is very simple. I only wish you to tell Sir John Tremayne that you lie here at our mercy, and the only condition on which your lives can be spared is that he shall cease to be angry with his daughter, the Señora de Valencia, and that she be the happy possessor of his favours, just as she would have been if her late noble husband had not so honoured her."

"And if this is written, what then, señor?"

"Then, well, you shall be treated as noble prisoners until we have restored your country to its rightful king. What would you? Is not that noble?"

I laughed in his face. I could do no other, so plain was his meaning.

"You laugh, Señor Hamstead, but why? I have promised great things, and I ask but little. What would you? I take my hand from you, and bah! you burn! But write this letter, and you live! Is not this fair?"

"And what becomes of the señora?" I asked.

"The señora?" He shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. "Who is the señora? What is she? She hath been protected—indulged—because she married a Spanish noble. Even the Church dared not harm her while he lived. He was the King's friend, and although the holy fathers have frightened him to do many things—aye, many things—so many that he hath much withdrawn his presence from Toledo, they could not make him consent to her proper punishment while Don Basilio Fernandio de Valencia lived. But now, what would you? There must be but one law. Faith or death. You have broken it in England, and what have you become? A strumpet sits on the throne, and——"

But he did not finish the sentence, for Mawgan Killigrew caught him by the neck.

"Take back those words, señor," he said, "or I will drive the tongue that spoke them down your vile throat."

For a moment I thought he was going to call in the guards, but he had a point to gain, and he refrained.

"Ah! I take back my words," he said, with a spiteful laugh—"and why? Because in a little while England will belong to Spain. The true faith will be triumphant, and ——But enough, señors; the fate of the señora will be happiest and best for her. She is in the hands of our Holy Mother the Church, who acts in love. What is done to her will be for the good of her soul, and for the glory of God. But that is naught to you, señors. It is for you to do my will!"

"Your will?"

"Aye, I have dallied long enough. For why should I, who can command, make bargains? Even with Spaniards I say, 'It must be done,' and it is done. Else what would you? *Los individuos del estado lláno*—by that I mean what you English call the commoners, the low-born, the base—will dare to set their opinions against ours! And where is the country then? The low-born have opinions—wills of their own! It would be the death of the country! Fancy it! Common people, aye, and people of other countries, the English daring to set their thoughts, their wills against the Holy Church, and against the Spanish nobles! Bah! You have heard my will, señors, and the letter will be written."

"Get it written," I said with a laugh.

"What? Dare you?" he cried.

"Aye, I dare!" I replied quietly. "Think you that we will tell Sir John Tremayne that we bargain for the mercy of a Spaniard? Think you that we will ask him to give our English lands and our English money to Spain? For that is what it means."

"And why not?" he asked. "Think you it will remain in Sir John Tremayne's hands when Spaniards have taken England? Think you that Spanish nobles would dirty their hands to fight with English *pulrea* if it were not for the lands, the gold? For religion, yes! But what would you? The chosen people of God may despoil the Egyptians. Do my will, señor, and gain your liberty, for by the Mass it will be all the same in the end."

"If you felt so sure of taking England, Señor Spaniard," I said, "you would not be so eager for the letter to be written."

"What of that? It is my will. Dogs of English, obey!"

He was losing control of himself now, and then for the first time the man who was dressed like a priest spoke to him in low tones.

"Your excellency will gain nothing by anger," he said in Spanish. "You remember what——," and then he spoke so low that I could not hear him.

Presently he turned to us again, his wicked old eyes gleaming with anger; nevertheless, he spoke with a kind of mountebank bravado.

"You know not who I am, señor," he said. "You know not my powers. You know not that my will is law even in high places. You know not that even were the Holy Inquisition to pass judgment, I could overrule that judgment! It is not for me to reason, but to command. Therefore think yourselves honoured that I have dealt with you as though you had even a right to question my desire. But this letter must be written. It is my will. If you knew my power you would obey without question."

"In my father's hall is a sword which he took from Señor Toledo," I said, "and the son is not afraid of the man whom his father hath beaten!"

At this he was no longer able to control himself. He struck me in the face with the flat of his hand.

"That for you and your father!" he cried. "It is enough! Your sandglass hath run out. I was wrong to show kindness to you beef-eating, beer-drinking *puerco!* You know my name, now mark the anger of Don Ferdinand Toledo! Tremble, you English *vagabundos!* My hand no longer protects, it punishes! You shall have a foretaste of the doom of your *mezquino* country!"

With that he threw the lower part of his cloak around his neck, replaced his hat, and with the simple expression, "*Bah!*" walked away.

Mawgan Killigrew laughed as he went out. "Surely you have played in the theatres, Master Toledo," he said; "you make an excellent mountebank!"

At this we all fell to laughing together, but in truth our position was serious. That we were safely guarded there could be no doubt, and I saw naught before us but the torture and the faggot. Still, we did not come to Spain to do the will of the Spaniard, and we had vowed never to yield to his demands. That I was in an ill-temper I admit, for although I did not despair of getting out of prison, I was angry that, although we had for the moment saved the life of an Englishwoman, we should as a consequence be cooped into gaol like three thieves. But neither Mawgan Killigrew nor John Trenoweth troubled one whit. For Mawgan was never the man to fear aught. Hope always seemed to rise in his heart, and even were he pinioned to a stake, waiting for the fire, I believe he would laugh at the man who

was holding the torch to the sticks. As for John Trenoweth, he seemed to be born anew. Ever since he had seen his sweetheart his confidence had not left him. To him her release was because of the hand of God, and he was joyful accordingly.

Thus it was that when some minutes later I spoke despondingly of the future, both refused to listen to me.

"Fear a Spaniard!" cried Mawgan, "by my grandfather's bones, no! As for writing such a letter, why, we could never hold up our heads again! I have already a dozen schemes in my head for getting out of this hole, and before a week is over we will let these Spaniards know what free Englishmen can do."

"The Lord hath saved once, and He can save again," said John Trenoweth. "Put your trust in Him, my masters, and be not afraid."

"What did that priest with Señor Toledo, I wonder?" I said, half to myself.

"*Sabe Dios*, as the Spaniards say," replied Mawgan; "besides, it doth not matter, for there are two ways by which we can get away from here!"

"What are they?"

"Both simple, very simple. One is, pull out that grating yonder, and creep out to the courtyard overhead; the other is easier, but more risky."

"Let's hear the other, for the first is foolishness," I replied.

"There are two men who guard us; well, when they bring our food in the morning, we will gag them, and then walk out."

At this I fell to laughing, so foolish did it seem, although Mawgan regarded his plan as sound and good. But we did not continue to speak of it, for at that moment we again heard whispering outside the door.

"More visitors," cried Mawgan. "By Tre, Pol, and Pen, but these Spaniards show us much attention."

"Speak not so loud," I whispered; "we know not how many of these people understand our tongue."

Again the door opened, and again we saw in the light of the candle he carried the face and form of the young priest who had accompanied Señor Toledo.

"What would you, señor?" I asked. "We would sleep, man, for we be weary."

"I have come for your good, señor; I have come to give you another chance of life, aye, and perchance of liberty." This he said in the Spanish language.

"Speak on, Master Priest," I said, "but if you know

our tongue, speak it, for my friends do not know yours."

At this he seemed confused, and he turned to the door as if expecting someone.

"Señors," he said presently, "do you remain obdurate? If you think, you will see that our demand is but little. But it may mean much. You are young, too, and liberty and life are surely sweet to you."

"As to that, Master Priest," said Mawgan, "we have our life; as to our liberty, we shall take it at the proper time. But if you think we will do your dirty work either because of threats or promises, you do not know us. Besides, what are your promises worth?"

"They are as certain to be fulfilled as our threats."

"But what guarantee have we?" asked Mawgan.

"You shall have the word of——," but here he stopped, as if not knowing what to say. Presently he went on again, however. "You know not what you refuse, señors," he said. "I tell you you are surrounded with danger, and your lives are not worth a piece of bronze money. Besides, your refusal touches more lives than your own. What can it matter to Sir John Tremayne, what——that is, is it not his daughter's right? And to her what may it not mean?"

"Look you, señor," I said. "Suppose I write this letter, what then? Suppose I say to him, 'Sir John, we are in prison, and the price of our liberty is your wealth. Dower your daughter with your wealth, and we are free.' Well, then, suppose he acts in accord with the letter. What then? Will your Church take its solemn oath that she shall be free to return to her father's house? Tell me that."

"Aye, it will," he replied.

"You swear that by the Mass," I said.

At this he stammered, like a man confused, as in truth he was.

"It may be; that is, if she renounces her errors, and promises obedience," he murmured presently.

"Aye," I replied, "and a fool can see what that means. But if she will not?"

At this he was silent for a moment, then he said, "It is not for a priest to answer all the vain questions of a heretic."

At this Mawgan Killigrew laughed again, while John Trenoweth said, "Bravely spoken, Master Hamstead. Fear not, the Lord will save us!"

"I tell you, you are mad," he cried. "It is your life, man, and more than your life! Oh, the Church is kind; but you know not!"

"It may be we are mad, Master Priest," I said, "but

it may be you know not Englishmen. We can die, my master, but we do not play into an enemy's hand. Tell the truth : where is the Señora de Valencia now ? "

He shuddered like a man under a great fear.

" She is in prison," he said ; " but I have prayed for her, prayed that she may be led to the truth."

" Is she alone in prison ? " I asked. " Have you put her to torture ? "

" And if you can free her from torture ? " he cried ; " if by writing this letter you can save her from untold agony, and give her liberty, what then ? "

" Aye, but how would that give her liberty ? " I asked. " You want her father's money. If Sir John dowered her with all he has, what then ? Your Holy Church, as you call it, would demand as the price of her life that she make it over to her. It would be taken by the Jesuits, and then what would they do to her ? If she would not forswear her faith in her Saviour, you would burn her for the glory of God. You have played the game before, Master Priest, and we have seen your cards."

His eyes flashed angrily, but he spoke no word. It was then that I for the first time took particular notice of his face, and as I looked I wondered, for here were no evil, villainous features, rather they were somewhat kind. It was true that the light of a fanatic burnt in his eyes ; nevertheless, they suggested kindness, humanity. Under some circumstances this man could believe he was pleasing God by burning a heretic, but on the other hand, he could be moved to pity.

I judged that he took his calling seriously ; nevertheless, he was still a man, with a man's passions, a man's hopes. In truth, I judged that here was a man who could love, and hate, and fight ; a man, moreover, who would rather fight openly than in the dark.

" I tell you, you do not know all," he said at length.

" Then tell us all, Master Priest," said Mawgan. " We did not come from England to play blind man's buff."

He hesitated again, then looked towards the door.

" Are you the tool of Señor Toledo ? " I asked.

He looked nervously around as though afraid.

" Anger not Señor Toledo," he said in a whisper. " Even now, I pity you. Death is not the worst thing, my masters. A man can die, and then be out of pain. That is, if he hath made his peace with the Church," he added quickly. " But there is worse than death. There is living. You are strong, and could bear much. That is why you have need to fear. First one finger, then another.

First one limb, and then another. First one eye, and then another. To die by inches, to die of torture, that is what those suffer who anger him. Think of it, my masters. What will he do? 'Write the letter,' he will say. 'No,' you reply. Then the left hand will be burnt off. 'Write the letter,' he will say. 'No,' you reply. Then the right eye will be plucked out. And so on until you obey."

Mawgan laughed in the priest's face. "That for Señor Toledo!" he said, snapping his fingers.

"What! do you not fear him?"

"Fear him! I never feared man yet. Have you ever read the story of Samson, Master Priest? He killed more at his death than during his life. Well, what would happen, think you? 'Write the letter,' he would say. 'Good,' I should reply. 'Give me a pen, and tell me what you wish written.' Then I should strike him once, and Señor Toledo would never speak again." At this Mawgan laughed heartily, like a man in good humour.

The priest looked at him in amazement.

"You know not," he cried. "You speak as if the señora were all. There is the señorita."

"Doth she desire this?" I asked.

"Aye, that she doth."

"Let us see her, Master Priest," I said. "If she desires that her mother be the tool of those who would burn her, let us have speech with her, and let us see if a daughter's love lives in her heart."

Again he looked towards the door, and hesitated.

"She hath no power," he said, like one musing. "She is bound, bound, bound. Besides, she is a child of the Church, taught from childhood to hate heresy and heretics."

"Then do your worst altogether," I said. "We will not write the letter, Master Priest."

"I could write it myself," he said.

"Aye, and think you that Sir John Tremayne would not know it was a forgery? Before we came away, we bade them all beware of such things. No, no, you have made your request, and you have heard our answer. Go to Señor Toledo, and tell him of what we have said. As for this señorita, the child who will connive at her mother's death——"

"You shall see her!" he interrupted.

"Very well, let us see her; but when?"

"Now. She is close by. I will bring her to you."

At that he went away, while we three looked into each other's faces, wondering what the outcome of all this parley might be.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW I FIRST SAW FATHER PARSONS

A MINUTE later the priest returned, and by his side was a tall form, clothed in a long mantle, the face and head covered with black lace. Mawgan Killigrew and I looked towards them with eagerness, but John Trenoweth seemed to take but little heed. Evidently he was thinking of the woman he loved, and of the way she had been saved from the flames.

"The Señorita de Valencia hath come to add her entreaties to mine," he said.

We remained in silence, waiting for her to speak, but she spoke not, neither did she move, although I thought she watched us through the lace which covered her face.

"I saw the señorita's mother to-day," I said. "She appeared to have suffered much for her faith. I wonder if her daughter's face in aught resembles her mother's?"

Still she did not speak, neither did she remove her veil, at the which I wondered, for I knew she would not have come to us had she not something of importance to say.

"The señorita hath never seen England," I went on, "never visited her mother's old home. It is very beautiful there. During the summer the whole country-side is covered with a wondrous green, and the birds sing gaily. The river Fal is as clear as crystal, not like the muddy Tagus. Surely God was bountiful of His gift when He created that part of the world where the señorita's forefathers lived! Sir John Tremayne is an old man, but so good, so kind! If his daughter were to return, his days might be lengthened into many years, and his sun would go down in a clear sky."

This I said because I wished to make her feel more at ease, and because I wanted to make her think kindly of the land and people that she had been taught to hate. Still she did not speak, but stood before us as immovable as a statue.

"It is no use trying to hide from the señorita that we have come to save her mother," I went on. "We would save her body from torture, and her soul from thraldom."

"What do you know about the soul," she said, "you who deny our Church, and set your heart against the truth?"

She spoke like one in anger. Her voice quivered with emotion, and I thought I saw her tremble.

"We believe in the truth that maketh free," I replied. "We have learnt that the Gospel of Christ is not to be spread with rack and fire; and we are beginning to learn that God would have no man coerced into faith."

"I did not come here to hear this," she replied, "but to help you to save your lives."

"We are not anxious to save our lives in the way which hath been suggested."

At this she threw back her veil, and revealed her face to us, and then I knew that we had seen each other before. This was she whom I had seen in the great cathedral, when the Archbishop was proclaiming the fact that the power of the Inquisition was to be again manifested in order to bring heretics to repentance. The light was dim, and I could not see her face plainly, but I thought she looked pale and anxious. There were dark rings round her eyes, too, as though she had suffered from sleeplessness. Otherwise she was the same haughty, beautiful woman I had seen a few days before. I saw now why she was different from the other Spanish women, why she was more tall and stately, why her face was not large and fleshy like theirs, why her form was not given to stoutness. She had English blood in her veins, and while she suggested the land of her birth she also made one think of the home from which I had come.

"You do not seem to realize, señors, that you are in the power of the Spaniards," she said.

"Our bodies may be for the present," I replied, "but neither King Philip nor the Pope hath power over our souls."

"You say that because you are in darkness, señor, because the light of the Gospel hath been taken away from you."

"Nay, rather, it hath been brought to us," I made answer, "and because it hath given us liberty; but doubtless the Señorita de Valencia desires rather to speak of other things than of religion."

"Yes, I would save my mother," she replied.

We all waited in silence, Mawgan Killigrew watching her face like a man who would remember every feature.

"I may not profess to you what I do not feel," she said presently. "For you three I care not a straw."

At this Mawgan and I bowed profoundly, but John Trenoweth seemed to pay no heed to her words.

"For what are you?" she went on. "You are heretics who are worse than heathen. Had you never known the

light of the Gospel, you might be worthy of pity, but, having had the light, you have chosen darkness. Therefore is your offence unpardonable."

"Then why trouble us?" I asked bluntly, for the words nettled me.

"Because I love my mother, and because I would save her," she replied.

We waited in silence for her to proceed.

"Oh, you English are a noble race!" she cried, like one in great anger—"so noble, so wise! You talk of chivalry, and of devotion to womanhood. You come to Spain on a mad-brained journey, thinking to take a Spanish lady from her people, and yet you will not do a little thing—a little thing!"

"Not when that little thing is an act of cowardice—aye, and worse!"

"And why, señors? If you were to do this, I might perchance save her from—— But what is the use? Your countrywoman is in torture, and yet you will not do this little thing! Money, money! What is it! Yet it might save her body, if it would not save her soul! But you care not, you care not!"

"If the señorita loved her mother," I replied, "she would herself have saved her from pain; she would have planned to take her to a land of liberty. She would remember that some of the best blood of England runs in her own veins, and have spared herself nothing to take her back to the home of her fathers!"

"Aye, and doomed her soul to a worse punishment. For myself I care not. As soon as my work is done, I shall give my life to religion. I shall go to a convent and give my life to prayer and holy thoughts; but when money can save my mother from torture, when it can give her time to repent—— Ah! but what would you? You are English."

"And doth your mother desire this, señorita?"

"My mother is still under the influence of the dark night of heresy," she replied.

"Your mother is the daughter of Sir John Tremayne," I replied. "She is the child of a man who hath never done a base deed, and because of this she would rather suffer and die than that the home of her fathers should become the property of those who have tortured her and dragged her to the stake. She is an Englishwoman, and not a Spaniard."

Her eyes fairly blazed as she looked at me.

"But for my mother I should rejoice that—that—— But why need I trouble? Every acre of English land will

soon be in the hands of the faithful Spaniard. It is his right. He hath been faithful to the Church, and God will reward him ! "

" If you believe that, why trouble about this letter ? " I made answer. " Ah ! but the señorita knows that the Spaniard can never take English lands. She hath the blood of the Tremaynes in her veins, and she knows that the Spanish swine will be driven into the sea, even as those others were driven in the days of our Lord."

" Then, even although it will save my mother from torture and death, you will not write this letter ? " she cried angrily.

" Aye, we will do it on one condition," I replied.

" What is that ? " she asked eagerly.

" That it be remembered that we ask naught for ourselves, and that, in return, your Archbishop will swear by the Mass that Señora de Valencia and her serving-woman, Esther Truscott, shall forthwith, and without further harm, be sent to their own country."

" And if not ? "

" Then I shall have proof that this is but a means to get English money into the hands of the Church," I replied.

" The señors ask nothing for themselves ! " she said mockingly.

" No," I replied. " They have never asked favour of a Spaniard yet, neither will they."

" The Lord hath saved us, and the Lord will save us again," interposed John Trenoweth.

" You care naught for the sufferings of an English lady, then ? You will allow her to be tortured—aye, dragged to the stake—and will not even do this to save her ? "

" If we did care naught, it would be no wonder, especially when her daughter, who might have saved her, plays into the hands of the Jesuits," I replied.

At this she laughed a bitter, mocking laugh, and, as I thought, made ready to leave us. And this, I saw, made Mawgan Killigrew angry, for he came towards her, his eyes ablaze.

" Aye, we do care ! " he cried ; " and because we do care we have come hither."

Then she laughed again. " But when you come you will do nothing," she cried. " You behave like ploughboys, and think that by loud words and foolish deeds you can save her."

" There you lie, señorita," he replied. " Aye, I use the word freely—you lie. And to prove it I will do this.

Let your Spanish fiends cease persecuting poor weak women, and give their attention to men. If they have a spark of manhood in them, let them set the women at liberty, and we will take their places. Aye, let them put me into the señora's dungeon, but for the sake of God let the women go free. Do you hear, Master Priest? I offer myself in the lady's place, trusting to God and my own right arm for the future."

"The señor is safe in making such an offer," replied the señorita. "Had he been at liberty, he would not so freely make such an offer; but he is already in the Spaniards' power. And he need not fear! He will surely receive the punishments of God!"

"You are unworthy to talk about the punishments of God, Isabella de Valencia," I said angrily. "Had you a spark of womanhood in your nature, you would scorn every Spaniard, and hate their cursed ways! But you, what do you? Knowing that your mother and poor Esther Truscott have suffered torments for their faith, you yet aid and abet those who ply thumbscrew and rack. You kiss the hand that would light the faggots."

At this I thought she would have struck me, for, in truth, all her control seemed gone; but she mastered herself presently, and spoke quietly again.

"Very well, Señor Hamstead," she replied; "I have offered you liberty, and——"

"Aye, *offered* it," I laughed mockingly.

"I have heard that Englishmen know not how to respect a woman," she said scornfully; "now I know it."

"Those who will consent to a mother's tortures are no longer worthy the name of woman," I replied, for she had aroused me to a great passion. "She who for many a long day hath been content to lie on a soft bed, while her mother hath been suffering the torments of hell, is not a woman at all. Had she been a woman, she would have denounced those who made her suffer, and taken her place by her mother's side. But leave us, señorita, for we be weary of such talk. And bethink of this, too: we will even yet set your mother free, in spite of your unfaithfulness."

"Well spoken, Master Hamstead," said John Trenoweth. "By the mercy of God, we will set her free, for the Lord is our shield and our right hand. He also is our sure defence."

At this the señorita left us alone again, I being ill pleased with the words I had spoken, and yet rejoicing that she knew what was in my heart. And after that no one spoke to us for two days, save the gaoler who brought us our food

three times a day. During this time we talked of many things, and, moreover, we debated warily as to a way of escape. In truth, we came to the conclusion that Mawgan Killigrew had not spoken falsely when he said it was possible for us to make our way out of our prison. It is true we knew not what would meet us when we got into the open air, but the getting there was not impossible. For this we found: the grating which let both light and air into our prison was not so securely placed but that we could remove it, impossible as this might seem to those who guarded us. But we did not deem it wise, for more than one reason. First, we were told by the gaoler that he had been informed that Señora de Valencia and Esther Truscott were to have fourteen days for instruction and repentance, before being again put to the torture, and that because of the King's letter they were to be well fed and housed during that time. Moreover, I did not see how we could help them by escaping. For I knew that the moment we got out of prison a hullabaloo would be created, so that our only safety would lie outside Toledo walls, even if we could get there. Therefore, as we had come to Toledo, not to fly from it, but to fulfil our purposes, we judged that we were better off where we were. And this was not all. We believed that we should be visited again, and perchance learn many useful things. Besides—and this may seem like foolishness—but John Trenoweth pleaded hard that we should stay there. It was the will of God, he said, and if we were patient He would as surely deliver us as He delivered Daniel from the lions' den.

Although I believed we could have escaped, therefore, we stayed quietly in prison, asking what questions we dared of the gaoler, and talking over many plans which we hoped to carry out in the future.

At the end of two days we were visited by three men I had never seen before, neither did I know their estate or authority, for they were covered by long cloaks which concealed whatever gay attire they might have worn, neither did they speak many words, as will be seen. I judged, however, that they were of good substance, because the gaolers paid them marked reverence, and they carried themselves as men used to command.

"Which of you is Señor Ruperto Hamstead?" one asked in Spanish.

"My name is Rupert Hamstead," I replied. "What would you, señors?"

"Follow," said one curtly.

"Whom, and whither?" I asked.

"That you will know soon," he replied. "At present it is for you to obey."

"And my friends?"

"They remain."

"Go, and God be with you!" said Mawgan Killigrew, when I told him what had been said. "We trust you and we will stand by what you shall say or do."

I therefore followed without further parley, and soon I discovered that this same Alcazar under which we had been immured was, indeed, full of prisons. We walked along gloomy passages, to the right and left of which were, as I judged, many dark cells, where, as I believed, many people were lying at that moment. For once or twice I heard moans and, as I thought, the clanking of chains. Whereupon I could not help wondering that we had been treated with so much kindness, seeing that we had had light, and air, and wholesome food, besides being allowed to remain together.

Presently we began climbing some steps, and ere long I found myself in a large room where was, as I thought, dazzling light, and much display in the way of costly furniture. But to this I paid but little heed, for I saw in the room more than one face that set my heart beating hard.

One was that of the Señorita de Valencia, looking very proud and very beautiful, although I thought her face showed signs of suffering, at the which I somewhat repented the hard words I had spoken. I also saw some ecclesiastics, who, as I believed, had taken part in the ghastly procession wherein Sir John Tremayne's daughter, together with Esther Truscott, had walked. I judged, moreover, that they were of high degree; and this made me wonder all the more, for I reflected that I was but a younger son, and therefore would not, according to Spanish ideas, be worthy of such high consideration. But it was not even the face of Señorita de Valencia which held my eyes. It was rather that of a man, who sat at a place of honour, and who looked at me as though he would read my soul. For I saw at a glance that he was no ordinary man, and, although his apparel was plainer than that of the others, all seemed to pay homage to him.

And this was no wonder, for at first glance I saw that he was a man who commanded obedience. He was a born ruler, if ever man was, but he ruled by fear and not by love. His face was very pale—in truth, his skin was like parchment—and although he could have been but little over forty he showed signs of age. He wore on his head the biretta which we in England had learnt to associate with the Jesuit priests, while from high up around his neck to his feet his

form was covered with a long black robe. The blackness of this robe was unrelieved in colour, save by a loose white collar which encircled his neck, and which formed itself into points by his chin, and a rich dark brown fur tippet which partly covered the white neck-cloth, and hung down over his chest. This attire, however, simple as it was, seemed to accentuate the power of the man, and to reveal his face with more clearness. His hair, which was iron-grey, was almost hidden by his biretta, nothing but a short, closely cut fringe being seen. This arrangement, however, revealed his broad, much-lined forehead. His eyes were very large and very dark. They were not round, I remember, but almond-shaped, and he used them in such a way that the skin of his forehead just above them was dragged into great furrows. His nose was long and large, and on his cheeks at each side of the nostrils were deep marks, which made me regard him rather as a man of sixty than of about forty-five. His mouth was plainly to be seen, for, although he wore a beard, it was trimmed very closely to his face—so closely that the parchment-like skin could be seen plainly.

On the whole, it was one of the most striking, yet one of the most forbidding, faces I had ever seen. Every feature seemed to say to me, "We belong to a man who is clever beyond words, who possesses a thousand secrets and formulates a thousand plans, but we also belong to a man cruel as death, and selfish as Judas himself."

He fixed his dark eyes upon me, and looked, I should think, for nearly a minute without speaking. Not an eyelid quivered, while his lips were immovable, save that I once thought I saw them relapse into a scornful smile.

"Rupert Hamstead?"

"Yes."

"From near Barnet, situate not far from London town?"

"Yes," I replied again, my eyes fastened on his, as though he held me by a charm.

"I, too, am an Englishman."

I was silent, for I knew not what to say.

"I, too, am an Englishman," he repeated. "Perchance you may have heard my name."

"It is possible," I said quietly and steadily, for I was desirous that he should not fancy that fear was in my heart.

"You *have* heard it. It is Robert Parsons."

My heart gave a great leap, and I could scarce refrain from a cry, for now I knew I was face to face with the great Jesuit, whom even Queen Elizabeth feared.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ARGUMENT OF FATHER PARSONS

"CAN you speak the truth, Rupert Hamstead?"

"I always do," I replied.

"Ah!" and he seemed to regard me with increased interest. "When it suits your purpose," he added presently; "but when a lie bringeth the greater profit, what then, young man?"

"I hold my peace," I replied.

"You know you have put your head into the lion's mouth."

"No, I do not know."

"But you have—and a calf's head at that."

At this I did not reply, although I felt my anger rising.

"You and your friends came to Spain for two things, Master Hamstead. First, to steal away from mercy and justice two Englishwomen; second, to play the spy. Do I not speak the truth?" he continued, for I made no answer to his words.

"When a lie may bring the greater profit I hold my peace," I replied.

"What now, sirrah!" he cried angrily. "Remember you are not in England."

"It would be difficult to forget," I replied.

"And I will tell you something else," he replied. "You will never see England again, unless you obey my will. What think you of that?"

"I think more than I shall say," I replied, for now I was face to face with Father Parsons he rather angered me than made me fear.

I thought for a moment that his own anger was getting the better of him; but he repressed hot words, and went on more quietly.

"I told you that I, too, am an Englishman," he went on. "Once, indeed, like you, I was in the gall of bitterness, and denied the faith. Now I forswear my country; do you know why?"

A pert answer was upon my lips, but I held my peace, for I saw I should do no good by giving way to wrath.

"I forswear my country because she hath departed from the true faith. She, like the swine, hath returned to

her wallow, and hath accepted an evil she-wolf as her ruler Because of this the Lord is angry with her, and He hath given Spain, His chosen and faithful people, the mandate to go forth, and drive out the heretic English, even as the Israelites drove the Philistines of olden time. For why hath He given Spain the victory on every hand? Why doth the blood of other people become as water when they meet the armies of the Lord? It is because He hath chosen the Spaniards for His peculiar people, and because they, having the one true faith, must triumph everywhere."

My heart grew hot with vexation, but I said not a word. And this, I believe, was because I wondered much what was in his mind. For of this I was sure: he would not have had me brought to him, neither would he speak to me in such a way, did he not desire something at my hands.

"Your father is of the true faith, Master Hamstead?"

"He doth not accept the Reformed religion," I replied.

"And yet he continueth to serve—well, we will be kind, and call her what she hath no right to be called—the English Queen?"

"He is not a traitor to his country," I replied.

"But to his God he is."

"There you lie, Master Parsons," I said, for I could ill brook evil words being spoken of my father.

At this he laughed. But there was no true merriment of heart in it. It was rather the expression of grim amusement.

"Well, perchance you are right," he said, after a moment's thought. "He is still of the true faith, and therefore wishes the true faith to be triumphant. He will rejoice when the servants of the Lord have driven out the uncircumcised Philistines, and delivered the land into the hands of the faithful."

To this I made answer that, although my father stood by the old faith, he was still an Englishman, even as were many others belonging to the Catholic families. After this he asked me many questions, the purport of some of which was plain, but many others were a mystery to me. Sometimes he aroused me to anger, and again he made me laugh at the ignorance I thought he displayed. But now I know that he had a purpose in his mysterious questions, for, in spite of myself, I was led to tell him all I knew concerning the condition of my country, the which he doubtless desired me to do.

It is true the Spaniards boasted that they knew of all that took place in England through their own agents. But this, I believe, was false. As all the world knows, all

priests who had received their ordination out of England were in 1585 forbidden entrance to English ports, and, although they doubtless set the law at defiance, they were much hindered in their endeavours to gain information.

I, on the other hand, had been in a position favourable to learning all that took place. I had sailed with those great heroes who had shaken even the Spaniard's confidence in himself, and, added to this, I had, during the period when I was confined to Hamstead Manor, on account of my wound, learned many things from my father concerning the general condition of our land.

And all this Father Parsons squeezed from me just as a man might squeeze the juice from an orange, the which he repeated to those who were around him.

At the end of this part of our interview I was therefore in an ill-humour with myself, and determined to be more on my guard. Not that I had gained nothing by our conversation ; for, although I do not believe he thought I learned aught, I discovered many things. One was that Father Parsons was in constant communication with the Pope, and that it needed all his powers to persuade him to promise money to Philip in support of the great armada which he proposed sending. Moreover, I discovered that the Pope was not so confident of the success of King Philip's enterprise as the Spaniards desired him to be, and could only be persuaded to offer support on the condition that he should receive much gain in money when the English power was destroyed. I learned, moreover, that the Jesuits were King Philip's constant advisers, and that he, in spite of much need of money, had granted large sums to them. But this was not all. I found out that the Jesuits were poor, and were constantly plotting to add to their treasury ; that, in truth, they were in sore straits, so sore that they had, much to their pain, been obliged to abandon work they had begun.

These things I learnt, not through so many definite sayings, but because, although I was far from wise in my answers to Father Parsons' questions, I nevertheless played a game of see-saw with many of them. Besides, sometimes Father Parsons and those with him got to talking among themselves, and they, perchance forgetting or not knowing that I knew something of their tongue, let out things which they, I am sure, desired to keep quiet.

I presently saw, however, that information concerning the feeling in England was not their chief desire, for presently Father Parsons harked back upon the subject concerning which Señor Toledo had visited me, and concerning

which I had been first led to speak to the Señorita de Valencia.

And here again I discovered that it was well known to them that Sir John Tremayne was not only the richest man in Cornwall, richer even than the Boscawens, the Edgecumbes, the Molesworths, or the Trevannions, but was one of the richest men in England, and that, should he dower his daughter with his possessions, the Jesuits could make terms with one who could fill their coffers, and enable them to carry on the work so dear to their hearts. It soon became clear to me, moreover, that those trickeries of Church law concerning which John Trenoweth had spoken when first he came to Barnet, and through which the Jesuits hoped to gain Sir John Tremayne's wealth, had come to naught, and they had been led to use what other means might come to their hands.

The coming of Mawgan Killigrew and myself was therefore much to their minds, and, seeing we had, by what may seem a foolhardy deed, placed ourselves in their power, they deemed us a valuable and, at the same time, an easy means whereby they might accomplish their purposes.

The truth of these conclusions came to me partly while I was in the presence of the men who had brought me hither, and more fully afterwards when, in silence, I mused over what had taken place.

I found that dealing with Father Parsons was far more difficult than with Señor Toledo, or, for that matter, with the Señorita de Valencia. For not only had he a specious way of putting things, but by his very presence he made it hard to disobey him. Indeed, at one time I thought I should have promised to write the letter he desired. Not for my own sake, but for that of the two Englishwomen who lay at the mercy of the Spaniard. For Father Parsons promised so many things, and with so many wily words, that it seemed to me that I was the veriest churl not to obey his will.

"Look you," he said, "you are young, Master Hamstead: but, although young, you have a wise head. What you say will not be according to the will of that thick-headed Cornishman, for you are a wiser man than he, and a stronger. What will you gain by refusing longer? This! I tell you, you will be put to torture, and at a word from me you fall under the ban of the Inquisition. Think of it, young man, for the tools thereof be not pleasant to the flesh, and I would fain save you from them. The faggot is not the worst part of a heretic's doom; it is that which precedes the faggot. Oh! you be brave: I know that right well.

So, for that matter, be your companions. But why should you die? Verily, it will go to my heart to see a brother Englishman die. Then what good will it do? Will you save the Englishwomen? Nay, rather you will anger the Church, and cause their sufferings to be greater. Ah! and you, an Englishman, cannot stand by and see them suffer their doom, as, by the Mass, you will have to do, before suffering your own. I tell you there is no escape. You have seen Toledo: you know how the city is guarded. Hitherto you have been treated kindly; but this is because of my will; but continue to refuse, and I tell you the very devils may pity you. On the other hand, obey. Write the letter as I shall dictate, and what happens? Why should you not renounce your heresy, and—well—ah! I need not say what. There be maidens in Spain, fair and rich: you have seen, and you know. Why may not Master Hamstead, and Master Killigrew, too, for that matter, live here in the sunshine, instead of under the dark English skies? Now choose, Master Hamstead, and save your countrywomen as well as yourself."

All this he said in a far more pleasing and telling way than I can make it out on paper, said it, too, while his curiously shaped eyes were fixing me just as a serpent fixes a helpless bird, while his voice so affected me that I could scarcely judge of the issues aright.

It was at this time I was on the point of promising him, even although I should curse myself to my dying day for doing so, and I believe he would have mastered me, had I not at that moment turned and saw the granddaughter of Sir John Tremayne. Then the power of Father Parsons was destroyed, and, instead of promising, I felt I would rather die a thousand deaths than do so. For the sight of her angered me beyond the telling. It came to me in the twinkling of an eye that this inhuman maid was in league with her mother's enemies. That, even while they had tortured not only her, but Esther Truscott, she had aided Father Parsons and Señor Toledo in heating the pincers, and seeing to the screws of the torturing instruments. Aye, I remembered how she had told me of her intention to go away into a nunnery even while her mother was left in the hands of the persecutors. I saw, too, that what I had been asked to do was not to aid the Señora de Valencia, but to give the Jesuits her father's money. I remembered that they had given me no sufficient promise that her sufferings should cease, or that her liberty should be restored, even although her father might dower her with all his possessions. And the Señorita knew this. All the time Father

Parsons had been seeking to play with me as a spider plays with a fly she had watched and listened and aided.

"She cannot be a woman, she must be of the devil," I thought. "Did she possess a woman's feelings, had she but the spark of the feeling which a daughter should feel for a mother, she would place herself on her mother's side. She would toil unceasingly, she would undermine the power of these priests, and set her free. But, instead, she aideth and abetteth them. She will consent to her mother's torture, even while she sees her grandfather's estates come into the hands of the Jesuits."

Although the fires of anger burned hot within me, I did not cry, nor rave. Rather I seemed like one who had grown cold, and I remember well saying to Father Parsons:

"And supposing Sir John Tremayne dowered his daughter, would she be able to keep it? To whom would it go eventually?"

"Ah!" said Father Parsons, with a smile, "naturally, we care for the children of the Church. It is because the granddaughter of Sir John Tremayne is robbed that we are anxious to do her justice. If you write this letter, and Sir John is wise, his wealth will fall into the natural course, and become the property of the señorita."

Then I bethought me that she had told me she would go into a nunnery, the which made me still more determined not to yield an inch.

"And now the business is concluded," said Father Parsons. "Master Hamstead is a wise young man, and will do our will. I will dictate such a letter as will lead Sir John to do his family justice, and in the meantime both he and his friends shall be better housed."

"Nay, Master Parsons, the business is not finished," I made answer.

"What, sirrah, you dare to disobey!" he cried in anger.

"I would rather put my hand in the fire and watch it while it burned than I would take a pen to write such a letter. And this, too, I say for Mawgan Killigrew." This I said not loudly, but with enough voice for him to hear plainly.

"By the Mass, and it *shall* burn, too!" he cried, his eyes gleaming like coals of fire.

"Think you I will become a cat's-paw to her!" I cried, pointing to the señorita. "Thank God, she is but partly English; otherwise, I would deny my country. What! Play into the hands of a creature who will stand by and see her mother robbed and burned, and who smileth upon her

murderers! Did I, my father would curse the day I was born, and my mother, who was snatched from the fires on the day that Queen Mary died, would sorrow that she had not died for her faith, rather than a son of hers should live to do so base a thing!"

"Stop his mouth!" cried Parsons. "Gag him! Away with him to the dungeons!"

"Aye, that is ever your argument," I cried, for now I no more feared Father Parsons than Master Latimer feared Bishop Bonner. "You claimed just now that we were of the same country. It is a lie, Master Priest. You be but a son of perdition, and do but carry on your father's trade. As for you," I cried, turning to the maid, "did I not know what a Spaniard is, I could not have believed that one in whose veins one drop of English blood flowed could have sunk so low as you. The sluts who live by robbing the dead bodies have more right to the name of woman than you!"

As I said this, Father Parsons looked at me open-mouthed, while others, not knowing the language which I spoke, gazed at me in apparent wonder, for I know my voice was hoarse with passion, and every bit of me trembled as though I had a shaking fever. But no sooner had I finished than I almost repented, even against my judgment, for such a look came on the señorita's face as I never saw on a woman before. Ghastly terror came into her eyes, her cheeks became as pale as polished bone, while she fairly gasped for breath.

At the sight of this I say I almost repented me, for I bethought me that, after all, she was a woman, and trained to hate those who professed her mother's faith. I remembered, too, that He whom I called my Saviour prayed even when on the cross that those who murdered Him might be forgiven. Besides, even as I watched her, I heard a mocking laugh, and, turning, I saw Señor Toledo, his eyes all aglow with evil pleasure, even as though he saw me torn by instruments of torture.

But the Señorita de Valencia spoke no word, neither uttered a cry, and before I well knew what happened next I found myself dragged out of the room, to be presently placed in a stinking dungeon.

It was here that, for the first time since I had come to Spain, despair filled my heart. While I had been with Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth, and while I could see a ray of sunlight, I was brave and cheerful. But now I was alone, neither did one ray of light pierce the darkness of the place. The smell of it, too, was nauseous beyond

words, while as I sat alone I heard noisome and, as it seemed to me, pestilential creatures crawl around. More than once creatures as large as rats crawled over me, and when I tried to catch them and throw them away the things bit me, and caused me much pain.

How long I was here I know not even to this day; for I had no means of marking the time, but I know that it seemed eternity to me. Then it was that I realised something of what I had been told concerning the darkness of hell, and had I not been supported by the thought that I had in no way betrayed my conscience, neither had I been faithless to the Gospel, I verily believe I should have gone mad.

After I had been there for a great length of tine, tortured by insects, and made sick by the smell of the dark hole, filled with noisome creatures as it was, the pangs of hunger got hold of me, and the dread thought came to me that I was doomed to die of starvation, or perchance, when I was too weak to defend myself, be eaten alive by the rats which swarmed everywhere. Not once did I sleep, although my eyeballs ached for the want of it, neither did I have one moment's peace.

After a time a gaoler appeared, carrying a light and bringing some food, and so starved was I that I snatched it from him and gnawed at the coarse meat as though it were a dainty fit for a king's table. All the same, it was corrupt, evil-smelling stuff, not fit to give to a dog. When I had eaten, the man watching me all the time, I asked him where I was.

"Still under the Alcazar," he replied.

"And my friends, where be they?" I asked.

"They be dining with Father Parsons," he replied.

"That cannot be," I answered.

"Aye, but it is true, señor, for the younger of the two hath promised to obey Father Parsons' bidding."

At first this cast me into a deeper gloom than ever, but the feeling did not last long. We had sworn to trust each other, and when I remembered this, I knew that Mawgan Killigrew would never do such a thing, and this comforted me mightily, as any man may judge.

"Have you any message to deliver?" he asked presently.

"Aye," I cried, "tell Father Parsons his treatment of me is worthy of him and his calling."

At this the man went away, leaving me a little more hopeful, for it is wonderful what food does for a man, even although it be vile, and fit only for vermin, even as mine was.

As I have said, how long I stayed there I know not, neither will I try to set down all the ghastly things I suffered while I was there, for, after all, a man should not bemoan his pains, especially when he suffers in seeking to do his duty. This thing I will say. I was comforted by three things. First, I felt sure that Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth were faithful; second, I knew that my dear mother was praying for me; and third, because of this, I had a feeling that God would never let me suffer beyond what He knew was for my good, and that He would deliver me in His own time.

Not that darkness did not sometimes fill my soul, but I will not dwell upon that, although the memory of the time makes me shudder even now. It came to an end at length, however, the manner of which I will here set down.

"Follow me," said the gaoler to me, after I had partaken of one of the meals he had brought.

"Whither?" I asked.

"The saints alone know," he replied. "But first you are to be tried."

"By whom, and for what?"

"By the Holy Inquisition," he made answer; and then he led me out of this foul-smelling place into a passage where some light came. I followed the man until I came to an open space, where I found myself amidst a medley company.

At first the light almost blinded me, and I could not see plainly; but presently, as I was able to bear the bright sunlight, I looked around me, and to my great joy I saw Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth.

"Thank God you are not dead!" I heard Mawgan say; and after that little was said, for I found myself taking part in a procession which presently passed out of the city, towards a building I had seen on the day when the fires were lit in the Circo Romano.

It did not take us long to descend the steep road which led towards the river, and ere long we entered the gateway of the little church called in the Spanish tongue El Cristo de la Vega, where such things befell us as surely were never before experienced by any man.

CHAPTER XVIII

EL CRISTO DE LA VEGA

WHILE on our way to El Cristo de la Vega, I could not help thinking of the other procession in which we took part but a few days before. For, as it came to me, this procession was but a continuation of that, and, had we acted otherwise, we might not have now been on our way to judgment. In one sense we had acted like madmen, and yet, as I reflected even then, we could not have done otherwise. John Trenoweth could not stand by and see his sweetheart burned, neither could Mawgan Killigrew and myself have refrained from defending them from the mad rage of those who attacked them. Foolish we might have been: nevertheless, we did only what any man who has the blood of an Englishman in him must do, and we did not repent.

Not that we had much reason to hope. We had defied Father Parsons to do his worst. We had denounced not only Señor Toledo, but the Señorita de Valencia. Indeed, I had called this woman names which must make her my enemy for ever. Moreover, we knew what being brought before the Inquisition meant, for the whole world had rung with the Spaniards' cruelty, while many an Englishman who had been captured on Spanish soil had been burnt by Philip's command, for the "welfare of religion and the glory of God." Thus, as I have said, there seemed little hope of our escape. We had, according to the Spaniards' ideas, not only come as enemies and spies, but we had defied their will; and this was to them an unpardonable sin. For before the coming of the great Armada they deemed themselves commissioned by God to make the world bend to their will. They, according to their own ideas, were the one people who defended the true faith, and, because of this, God had everywhere given them victories. They claimed much of the New World and the Indies, and they believed that ere long the wealth of the whole world would be theirs. For this reason they could not understand that any people could regard them as other than the chosen of God, and as a consequence their pride and arrogance knew no bounds. Especially were they angry that the English should have defied them, and they therefore took special delight in venting their wrath upon them.

Still—and I am proud to recall it—not one of us showed fear as we found our way to the Church of El Cristo de la Vega. Mawgan Killigrew walked with a jaunty air and with a smile upon his lips. He even looked with contempt on those who guarded us. For, as I have said, I do not believe that Mawgan knew what fear meant, neither did he ever give up hope. He was one who never despaired even in the darkest hours, and would have defied his tormentors even if they were putting him on the rack. As for John Trenoweth, he was buoyed up with the belief that God would interfere on our behalf. Since the day that Esther Truscott had been saved from the fires, as he believed, by the special intervention of Providence, he paid no heed to threat nor danger. As he said, his heart was all aglow with faith, and the delivery of Esther on the day of the fire was but the earnest of the greater delivery which God would surely bring about.

Indeed, if the truth must be told, I was the most downcast of the three. For one thing, I had not Mawgan Killigrew's hopeful nature ; neither did I possess that faith which made John Trenoweth sing hymns of hope even while lying in the dark dungeon. Perhaps this was because I had been lying alone in a foul hole among rats and other poisonous vermin, or perhaps it was because I had seen the look on Father Parsons' face when I had refused to do his bidding. Besides, I knew Señor Toledo better than did either of these men. I knew his hatred of my father, a hatred which I was sure descended to his son.

Still, I walked uprightly with the rest. Perhaps, had we been put to torture, this might not have been, but the Spaniards had a law that no heretic should be put to torture until he had been brought before the judge, and his heresy proved.

As I have said, the Church of El Cristo de la Vega is but a little place, and contains not room for more than a hundred people in all, and I remember even now that I reflected, on entering, that only a little of the crowd who followed could gain admission. I was calm enough, too, to take note of the pictures which hung around the church, as well as the figures of the saints and apostles which were placed all over the building.

Sitting near the altar I saw the Archbishop who had preached the sermon in the cathedral, and beside him I saw Father Parsons, who gave me a look which made a shiver creep down my back.

Near Father Parsons I saw Señor Toledo, who watched me steadily, his small eyes being so closely placed together

that the narrow bridge of his nose scarce seemed to divide them. These and other men I saw, but I did not pay much heed to them owing to a strange figure which was placed in a recess behind the altar. And this was no less than the figure of Christ, curiously carved and strangely misshapen. The face of Christ was but little different from that set forth in the faces of a thousand other statues which may be seen in Papist churches all over the world. It represented great agony and ghastly terror, which has always seemed to me to be wrong. For I do not believe that the face of the Son of God was ever full of agony and terror. If it were, He would not be the Son of God, neither would the little children have nestled in His arms, as they did when He walked the tortuous paths of men. But it was not the face that chained my attention. It was the right shoulder, which looked, as I thought, dislocated. And this fact was, as I afterwards found, peculiar to this little church, and did, indeed, give it much importance. For, more than three hundred years before, it is said that a Jew was accused of great sin, and was brought to this very church to be judged. And after many charges had been brought against him, which seemed to prove that he was guilty, the Jew prayed to the God of Abraham to testify to his innocence. Whereupon the priest who was the judge said that if God would work a miracle on his behalf he should be set free.

"And what miracle would you that God should work?" asked the Jew.

"This," replied the priest; "if thou be guiltless of this crime, then let God cause that the right arm of the Saviour, which thy forefathers did crucify on Calvary, be uplifted."

Thereupon the Jew prayed again, that the God of Abraham would testify to his innocence; after which he arose from his knees, saying that he was ready.

Then the priest turned to the figure of Christ, and said, "If this dog of a Jew be guiltless of the crime of which he is accused, lift, O Lord Christ, King of heaven and earth, Thy right arm." Whereupon, it is said, a shiver passed through the carved statue and the right arm was slowly lifted, after which the Jew was set free, and for many years the people of Toledo were more kind to the Jews, granting them many privileges.*

From that day many other judgments took place in the Church of El Cristo de la Vega, and the figure of the Christ

* This story is still told to visitors at Toledo who desire to know the history of the Church of El Cristo de la Vega.—J. H.

was appealed to, even as the priest had appealed to it when the Jew was tried, but never since then had the arm moved. Rather it had remained in the position in which it was left at the Jew's trial, and this, as I have said, gave it the appearance of being dislocated.

The day on which we were brought into the church was bright and sunny, but the windows being much darkened by painted figures, and there being only one of any great size, the place seemed to me drear and cold.

Now we three were examined together before the tribunal which had gathered at the little church, and I would that I could write down in detail all that took place; but although I have racked my memory sorely, I can call to mind only a little of what took place. For this I have found: there be times in a man's life when the mind will not retain what it takes hold of. And that not because one is prone to forget, but because of various happenings which blot out what one would fain remember. Nevertheless, there be some things which come back to me, the which I will set down for the sake of the curious.

First of all, I remember, prayers were said in Latin, after which there was much doleful chanting, the very remembrance of which makes me think of wintry rain. Presently the chanting took, as it seemed to me, a more savage character, telling rather of vengeance than of sorrow, and when it came to an end there was a great silence, so great that I could hear my heart beating. This silence, however, did not long continue, for presently a stern, harsh-looking man spoke to us in the Spanish tongue.

He told us that we were accused of many evil things. We were enemies to the Spaniards, who were the servants of the Lord, chosen by Him to establish in the world that one true faith. We were, moreover, avowed servants of Elizabeth of England, who was the child of an enemy of the faith, and who for her deadly crimes had, in the merciful kindness of the Holy Church, been excommunicated, and was therefore anathema maranatha. That this same Elizabeth had no just claim to the English throne, which by right belonged to Philip of Spain, not only because of his marriage with that most Christian Queen Mary, but because of his descent from one of the English Kings. That as servants of Elizabeth we were therefore enemies not only of the true King, but of God Who had chosen him. We had come to Spain with two evil purposes. First, to take away from the loving arms of the Church two women who had hitherto rejected her mercies, refused her forgiveness, and defied her Heaven-given powers. Second, we had come to

spy out the land, and, if possible, to go back to the sons of Belial with such reports as might help them to resist the servants of the Most High God. We had also intervened on behalf of the two children of darkness, and that through our intervention the punishments of the Church had been for a little while delayed.

"For these things," he said, "the Lord hath delivered you into our hands, to do with as we shall deem right and just. Did we act according to our lawful powers, we should have put you to death without trial; but to show you, and the world, how false have been the judgments of our enemies, we have brought you here that you may speak for yourselves.

"Nevertheless, it is not of these things that you will speak. The charges we have brought against you merit death, but these be but the smallest of your offences. For kings, divinely appointed as they may be, are but men, and nations are but the mere breath of God. But you have denied the Holy One of Israel, you have denied the doctrines of the Church of God. You denied her powers, pulled down her altars, and refused to obey her behests. Being a traitor to your King is but little, compared with the denial of your Lord, and it is concerning this that you shall be judged this day."

Whereupon he asked us many questions, the which I have, in a number of cases, forgotten; but I do know that, even as he asked me them, I remembered the words my mother had spoken to me on the day I left my home, and I also called to mind the promise I had made never to deny my Lord.

This, moreover, I call to mind with great joy: not one of us did in aught give way to their demands, neither did we use honeyed words concerning the abominations which they would have us accept. Not that we knew much of the mysteries of divinity; but I had read the Bible which had been translated by Master Wycliffe, and had found therein nothing which supported Popish claims, but otherwise. Moreover, we had had enough of Popery during Mary's time, and had learnt its meaning. In truth, as Mawgan Killigrew said to Father Parsons, when he spoke to him in his own language concerning these things, it was against a man's common wit to believe that a bit of bread or a cup of wine could become Christ's blood and body. As for the claim of the Pope, it was so much nonsense, as any man out of Bedlam could see.

And this Mawgan said with a good-natured laugh, as though he enjoyed the saying, as I believe he did. As for

John Trenoweth, he spoke harder words than either of us, so that when Father Parsons translated his language, the Spaniards put their fingers to their ears, in order, as they said, to be deaf to such blasphemy.

The upshot of the whole business was that we refused to yield one inch to their demands, neither did we in aught deny one article of the Reformed faith. Moreover, we declared most fervently that salvation was obtained by faith in our Saviour alone, together with repentance of sin, and newness of life, without the aid of Pope or saints, or priests of any sort whatever.

"And what expect you, sirrahs?" said Father Parsons angrily.

"We expect to see you all confounded," cried John Trenoweth confidently. "The Lord who saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will save us from the fiery furnace, even as He saved them."

At this both Father Parsons and Señor Toledo laughed as though they saw in his answer food for merriment, and presently Father Parsons said: "We shall hear you tell a different tale presently, you blasphemer. Remember, we have power temporal as well as spiritual, and it is neither wise nor kind to be gentle with those who have denied their Lord. I have seen stronger and braver men than you plead for mercy, and verily you will remember my words before many hours have passed away."

At this Mawgan Killigrew laughed like a man filled with merriment, for even yet he did not seem to realise what torture may make a man do.

"Laugh, will you!" cried Parsons, his eyes gleaming with passion. "Away with them to the dungeons, and let them taste of the hell which shall be theirs for ever!"

"Nay, that may not be," said the Archbishop. "Richly as they deserve all they will surely suffer, for never have I seen heretics so stubborn and so blaspheming, they must yet be dealt with according to our law and our custom here at Toledo."

"Aye, and what is that?" asked Father Parsons, with a scowl.

"We must appeal to the arm of Christ."

At this both Señor Toledo and Father Parsons smiled grimly.

"As to that," they cried, "let this test be proceeded with without delay. If they be saved in this way, well—I will not interfere"; and with that, although he had a little while before knelt to the figure of Christ which stood

behind the altar, he now looked at it, as I thought, almost scornfully.

"What is to be done next?" asked Mawgan.

And this I could not tell him, although there was a general movement among all our judges. Whereupon I saw that what was next to follow was to be done with much formality. Some of the priests commenced chanting again, while there was much waving of censers and ringing of bells. After this all the people, saving only Mawgan Killigrew, John Trenoweth, and myself, fell prone before this figure, and abased themselves with much ado, chanting prayers in Latin all the time.

After they had continued this for some minutes they all arose as if with one accord, and then, standing still, they kept their eyes on the carved image of Christ.

Presently the priest who had first spoken to us addressed this carved figure. He spoke also in the Spanish tongue, so that I could follow his words, although I cannot repeat them all here, for he said many things which I may not set down.

But this he did. He called upon the figure of Christ to make manifest His will concerning us. He asked whether we were guilty of the things laid to our charge, and therefore worthy of the anger of the Church, or whether we were guiltless, and must therefore be dealt with mercifully.

Now this seemed to me a mere matter of mockery, for the thing was but wooden, and although I, unlike some who had accepted the Reformed faith, did not deem that the Papists' worship of idols called so much for anger as for pity, it did seem to me blasphemy to call upon a senseless figure carved in wood to make known the will of God, as to whether we were guilty of the charges brought against us, and therefore worthy of torture and death. For I did not know what I learnt afterwards. As I have said, I found out later that ever since what I have told about the Jew took place this wooden figure was constantly appealed to, but that never since, so just had been the judgments of the Church, had it once moved, and that the arm had remained even as it had been when it moved to save the Jew from death.

Not knowing this, as I said, I felt the whole performance to be a mockery. Nevertheless, I watched intently while the priest addressed the wooden image; and presently, when, as I thought, he was concluding the addresses made on such occasions, I felt my heart beat faster, while Mawgan's eyes were fastened on the silent figure, as though someone had cast a spell upon him.

"Make known Thy will, *El Cristo de la Vega*," said the priest, "and proclaim whether they be guiltless or worthy of death. If Thine hand be still, they shall die, but if Thou dost lift it they shall have mercy."

At this there was a deathly silence for some moments, although I noticed even then that a scornful smile rested on the faces of both Father Parsons and Señor Toledo. Then a great cry arose from the spectators, a cry such as I have never heard before. Surprise, dismay, terror, was in it; such a cry as one might make if the grave of a dead man were to open, and he were to come forth therefrom.

"Look!" gasped Mawgan: "the arm moves!"

He spoke the truth. There, right before us, we saw the bare arm lifted upward and then fall back to its place again.

This, I say, took place as I have here set it down, so that, not knowing what was to be revealed in later days, it seemed as though God had worked a miracle on our behalf.

CHAPTER XIX

HOW THE FLAME BEGAN TO BURN

YEARS have passed away since the events I have just narrated took place, and yet even now I can scarce repress a shudder at the thought of what I felt then. For in truth it seemed as though God Himself had interfered on our behalf, and told our judges that we were not worthy of death. To those who hap to read this, it may be that the occurrence is of little interest, but to us who stood there expecting to hear a dread sentence pronounced, it came as a sign from the other world. Everything, moreover, tended to add to this feeling. All around were the figures of saints and virgins. Relics of those canonised by the Church were placed in almost every corner. Fingers, hands, locks of hair, and many other things, purporting to be the relics of holy people, were even within reach of me at that very time. The whole building was filled with the smell of incense, while the gloom which everywhere pervaded made one think of ghostly visitations. Then the chanting of prayers and the singing of dirges had all tended to inspire us with dread, while the evident fear of the ecclesiastics and others who had acted as our judges made us sure that they too regarded what we had seen as a sign from heaven.

In truth, the whole place was in confusion. But it was not the confusion which led to noisy disturbances, but rather that inspired by holy terror.

"The arm hath been lifted, and mercy must be extended to them," said the man who had addressed the image, and his voice trembled with fear.

At this no man made answer, for I believe they were afraid to hear their own voices; and at this I did not wonder, for I felt the cold blood run down my own legs, while my tongue refused to formulate words.

Mawgan Killigrew, however, seemed not at all frightened.

"What means it?" he whispered to me. "The thing moved, and every man of us saw it. Does that signify that we shall be set free?"

But I did not speak. My mind was too full of wonder to think of what might happen.

"A miracle! A miracle!" cried someone presently in a loud voice. "The prisoners must not be put to torture or to death."

"Heaven hath delivered us," cried John Trenoweth. "Even their images demand that we shall be set at liberty," for I had told him the meaning of what had taken place.

Only a few understood his words, but to those who did they brought back the difficulties of the situation. For we had denied the things which they had declared essential to salvation; we had openly defied them to do their worst; we had refused to recant one article of our faith. Therefore, to proclaim us innocent would be to set their words at naught, and raise numberless doubts in the minds of believers. If we were set at liberty, it would seem as though the arm of the Lord had been uplifted to set His seal upon our words. And this both Father Parsons and Señor Toledo saw.

"The will of the Lord be done," said Father Parsons. "We have received a sign that these men must have further time for repentance, and meanwhile they shall have instruction in the way of salvation."

"But they must be closely guarded," said Señor Toledo, looking towards me angrily, and I saw that the hatred which he bore my father extended to me.

"Aye, and tidings of this sign must be conveyed at once to the Holy Father at Rome, also to his Gracious Majesty."

And presently this was agreed to, although I believe that but for Father Parsons and Señor Toledo we should have been set at liberty forthwith. Nay, more, such was the effect of the event upon those present, I believe many would have treated us with great respect, if not reverence, had not Father Parsons spoken with so much decision. I soon saw, however, that he quickly shook off the ghostly fear that at first possessed him, while his great personality made others yield to him.

"It cannot be that they can be set at liberty," he said, "for what we have seen doth not mean that they be guiltless. In truth, we do know that they be both heretics and traitors. Nevertheless, what we have seen meaneth that they must not die. Perchance, even they, like the blessed Apostle St. Thomas, may by this means be led from the error of their ways and become valiant defenders of the truth. Meanwhile, they must be kindly treated, but safely guarded. Perchance, too, when the King heareth of what hath taken place he will make known his will concerning them."

After this a great solemn silence fell upon us all, and presently, when the priests began chanting again, every man looked fearfully around him as though afraid, and I believe that both Father Parsons and Señor Toledo breathed a sigh of relief when once we got into the open air again. Indeed, though we had been strangely delivered, I was so full of fear that I dared not turn my head when going out of the door in order to look at the figure the lifting of whose arm had saved us from death. For I have but ill told this part of my story if those who read cannot imagine the fearsomeness that the whole business cast upon us, although I have been told since that more wonderful miracles had taken place in the city of Toledo.

Be that as it may, a dread silence possessed us as we walked into the little yard, where I saw by the look on the people's faces that news of the strange happening had reached them. Not an angry word, nor a look of scorn was given to us as we climbed the hill towards the Puerta del Cambron; rather I saw not only fear, but respect in the people's eyes, as though they regarded us as being under the especial guardianship of heaven.

Presently we found ourselves back at the Alcazar again, but we were no longer placed in a dungeon, but in comfortable quarters, where we had good food placed before us, and clean clothes to put on, which, as may be easily believed, was a great boon, especially to me. Moreover, we were still allowed to remain together, which fact gave me much pleasure. Not only because I had much to say to Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth, but because I had a great fear of being left alone. For even as I walked through the streets of Toledo, while the people kept surging around us, and nodding toward us, while they spoke in subdued voices concerning the marvellous thing which had happened, I could see the strange figure before me, and I bore in mind what seemed to me the terrible expression on its face as it lifted its right arm. This, I say, made me fear greatly, and caused me to be overjoyed when I knew that we were to be together.

For, although I think I am as brave as another man, and can, when needs be, fight against odds without flinching, my heart grows soft in face of that which is ghostly. Flesh and blood trouble me not, but the presence of the ghostly dead makes me full of foreboding and fear. Thus it was that the memory of the event to which we owed our bettered conditions, while it made me wonder much, also made me full of strange fear.

After we had partaken of food, and had clothed our-

selves with clean garments, I, being much wearied, fell asleep, from which I did not awake for many hours. And this was no wonder, for, as I have said, sleep was next to impossible in the gloomy dungeon where I had been cast. When I did wake, however, I felt much refreshed, especially when I heard John Trenoweth speaking cheerily.

"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes," I heard him say to Mawgan Killigrew.

To this Mawgan Killigrew gave no answer, although I saw a look in the young Cornishman's eyes that I could not understand.

"The thing is," he said at length, "what steps we are to take next. Do you not think so, Rupert?" for he saw that I was awake and eagerly listening to him.

"Methinks we shall have time to make plans," I said. "These Spaniards will do naught to harm us for many days."

"Why think you so?"

"I believe they are all too frightened to harm us, save Father Parsons and Señor Toledo," I replied; "and but for them, I ween we should be free men."

"Aye, that may be, but the end is not yet," said Mawgan. "And it seemeth to me it is time we begun to make our plans."

"What for—to escape?" I asked.

"Escape!" cried Mawgan. "Nay, but to help the daughter of Sir John Tremayne and Esther Truscott to escape."

"We shall be closely guarded," I said.

"Aye, but we be together again, and the people will look upon us with kindly eyes."

"But we must act warily."

"Aye, and bravely. We shall see gay doings soon."

"Have you considered the meaning of what we saw in the Church of El Cristo de la Vega?"

"Aye, I have considered it much. It makes one believe in the stories which these Papists tell about their saints and virgins."

"I tell you the Lord hath spoken," said John Trenoweth. "Let us trust and not be afraid."

"Afraid!" said Mawgan, "who is afraid? Nevertheless, I see great doings ahead."

"What doings?" I asked.

"By this time all that hath taken place will be noised over all Toledo. By to-morrow it will have reached the King, wherever he is."

"Well, what then?"

"Report hath it that he is a great believer in apparitions and signs from heaven," said Mawgan. "If that be true, I think he will want to see us, and then, perchance, he will also desire to see Señora Valencia. In such an event, we should have to travel to him wherever he is. Now, while we are travelling thither, we ought to make good her escape as well as our own."

"Well spoken, Master Mawgan," said John Trenoweth. "Well spoken!"

"Mean you that we should try to escape before reaching the King?" I asked.

"Aye, I do mean that," he replied.

"Then should we go back with our work but half done," was my answer. "It is true we might save the women, but what of the other part of our work? If there is a chance of being brought before the King, I would fain avail myself of it. It may be, too, I can learn something from him which it would advantage Admiral Drake to know."

"Let us not trouble about such things," said John Trenoweth. "It is for us to do our duty at every turn, and trust in the Lord to protect us. Hath He not done so already?"

Concerning these things, as well as the marvellous way our prospects had been brightened, we conversed for a long time. Not with voices loud enough for any man who might be listening to hear, even although he knew the English tongue, but in low whispers, as a man should speak under such circumstances. We also made many plans for the future, plans which laughed at impossibilities, and which seem to me now as mere madness, although at that time we discussed them seriously enough.

But all these came to naught, as will presently be seen. The truth is, we did not think, while our brains were busily engaged in seeking to prepare for what should take place, that others were likewise discussing our future; therefore, it came to us somewhat as a surprise when a summons also came to us to appear at the house of Señor Toledo. It was then I remembered that Señor Toledo's house was close to the Alcazar, and was, in fact, connected with this great building.

"When go we to the señor's house?" I asked.

"At once," said the man; "the señor and his friends await you now."

So as soon as we had partaken of our food, we were led along many passages, until at length we reached a large and well-appointed chamber, where we were bidden to wait until such time as Señor Toledo might call us to his

presence. And this was not long, for no sooner had the man made known the fact that we had come thither, than we were led without more ado to the place where he was. I saw by this, moreover, that we were not regarded as ordinary prisoners, and that Master Toledo was a man of much authority. Although he was of no great account when he met my father in England, he had now risen to great estate, and held the fate of many people in the hollow of his hands.

It became clear to me, moreover, as I entered the room where he was, that we were not brought before a tribunal, but rather to what seemed like a friendly conference. For seated in the room was the Señorita de Valencia, who was clad in beauteous attire, and who looked very fair and lovely, as she watched our approach. Near her, too, was another woman, who was much older than she, and in whose face was no suggestion of the blood of the Spaniard.

Señor Toledo greeted us, I thought, with great courtesy. He caused wine to be placed before us, and spoke pleasantly, like a man in great good humour. And this set me on my guard, for I remembered what my father had written concerning him. Moreover, I could not forget the look he gave me when he had sat as one of our judges in the Church of El Cristo de la Vega.

"You fare better than most Englishmen coming to Spain," he said smilingly, and thereby revealing his yellow teeth. "But then, there have been strange happenings."

At this neither of us uttered a word, for although John Trenoweth longed to speak concerning the goodness of God, we had agreed to be chary of speech, and not to say one word which might in any way endanger us.

"I have seen to it that the place where you at present have to reside has all necessary comforts," he went on, "that your food shall be clean and wholesome, and that your beds shall be fit to lie on."

And still we kept silence, whereupon the woman whom we had not seen before, cried out like one in anger :

"Speak, my masters, speak, and let me hear your voices."

And this she said in perfect English ; and so free were her words from any suggestion of Spanish that I might have fancied myself in England. Then I noticed, moreover, as I again looked around the room, that it presented an English aspect, and did not suggest that it was situate in the very heart of Spain.

"Wherefore should we speak, señora, when there is naught that needs saying ?" I asked.

"Call me not señora," she said again, like one in anger. "Call me 'Mistress,' even as you would call an English housewife; and speak, because I long to hear English voices and English words."

"Mistress what?" said John Trenoweth bluntly, and thereby he asked the question that was in the heart of both Mawgan Killigrew and myself.

"Mistress what?" she repeated. "Do you not know, Master Hamstead? Hath not your father told you?"

Then, as I bethought me of what my father had written, I knew who she was.

"You are she who was Mistress Leah Varley," I said. "You are she who betrayed both my mother and my father."

This I said not angrily, but quietly, as one who had just remembered a long forgotten event.

"I am she who loved Mistress Faith Bedford," she cried, "and who have often longed to see her as the mother of brave sons. How fares she, Master Hamstead? And how fares your father?"

"They be both in good health," I replied.

"And where live they, Master Hamstead?" she continued to ask eagerly. "At Barcroft Hall or at Hamstead Manor?"

"At Hamstead Manor," I replied. "Lord Bedford lives at Barcroft Hall."

"*Lord* Bedford!" she cried eagerly. "And hath Master Bedford been made a lord! Aye, but that interests me mightily! And have you been to Barcroft Hall of late, Master Hamstead?"

"It is but a few weeks since I was there."

"Ah! but a few weeks! And that old yew tree in the garden, Master Hamstead, grows it still?"

And thus she continued to ply me with many questions, which I answered, for there was something in the tone of her voice which made me think of home, and thus made me feel kindly towards her. But even as I spoke to her I turned my eyes often towards the Señorita de Valencia, who I saw was watching us with great eagerness. It was then, moreover, that I realised what a beautiful maid she was; for, as I saw, she possessed not only those excellencies of face and figure which make our English maids so fair, but also those of Spain. The mixture of Spanish and English blood somehow added a new element to her charm. Especially did I feel this as I caught sight of her eyes. For they were larger than those common among English maids, and burned with a brighter lustre. In truth, in

spite of their darkness, they shone like stars, and so full of expression were they that they seemed to speak to me, although her lips formulated no word. Her skin, moreover, was not pale and creamy, like that of the Spanish women of gentle blood; rather there was a ruddy tinge beautiful to behold. And yet there was a suggestion of the Spaniard even in her face. Especially was this to be seen in the rich red of her lips, and the form of her chin. Her form, moreover, was somewhat fuller than that of an English maid of the same age, although she lacked not one whit of the elegance of those fair dames which thronged Elizabeth's Court.

In truth, as I looked, I much repented me of what I had said to her when I had been brought before Father Parsons, although I still felt a great anger at the thought of her behaviour to her mother.

As I have said, Mistress Toledo plied me with many questions, the which I answered, but in such a way that I turned the channel of our conversation to the señorita's mother, and when I had done this, I spoke directly to the maid who interested me more than either of the others.

"Your mother, señorita," I said, "I trust she is well?"

At this she reddened much, but spoke calmly, telling me that her mother was in good health.

"And is she still in prison," I asked, "she and Esther Truscott?"

"She never hath been in prison," she replied. "She hath been only kept in seclusion that she may learn the way of truth."

It was then that I realised the rich fullness of her voice. It was deeper and mellower than that of the woman who sat by her; for that matter, it was more musical than any voice I have ever heard, not even excepting that of my dear mother. And I remember being angry with myself for having to confess it, even in thought.

"It seems," she went on thoughtfully, "as though the saints have smiled on you, although you be come to Spain with evil intent. For your coming saved not only Esther Truscott from death, but my mother is much better in health since the day she first saw you. Moreover, what I have heard concerning the strange happening in the Church of the Christ of the Field makes me think that the Holy Mother will lead even you to the truth."

This she said in such sweet tones, that I felt my heart growing kind towards her; nay, more, as my eyes again met hers, I felt a great fluttering at my left side, the reason for which I could not at that time explain.

"It was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes, my young mistress," said John Trenoweth, "and I pray that even you may be led to understand the power that sustaineth your mother, as well as that of my beloved sweetheart, Esther Truscott."

"And is she your sweetheart?" This she said, as I thought, smilingly yet eagerly, and there was such a strange tenderness in the way she spoke that even her Spanish way of saying English words sounded like music.

"Aye, my young mistress, that she is," replied John Trenoweth. "For more than twenty years have I loved her, and for more than twenty years hath she loved me. It is true she left me that she might serve your mother; nevertheless, she hath never ceased to love me."

"Then you knew my mother before she wedded?"

"Aye, that I did," replied John, "and often did she speak to me when I went to Sir John Tremayne's house a-courting. 'John,' she would say, 'you must not steal Esther from me.' Tell me about her now, young mistress, for she must have tended you and nursed you when you were but a baby."

At this the maid's eyes grew softer, and I thought I saw the tears well up into them; but presently they became harder again, as she said:

"It is but little I knew of her, for I was taken away from her when but very young, and placed among the good sisters to be educated."

"Ah!" I thought to myself, "now I know why she careth so little for her mother. She hath never known her. She hath been taken away from her when a child, and taught to despise her and to regard her as a heretic."

At this I pitied the maid, and was led to think still less harshly of her behaviour towards her mother.

"That is but a poor reason for being willing to stand by while my maid was tortured," said John Trenoweth, "and a still poorer reason for forgetting your mother."

At this her eyes fairly blazed with anger.

"How dare you!" she cried, and her voice quivered not only with rage, but, as I believed, with pain.

It was then that I felt a great self-contempt and self-loathing, for in a moment it came to me that I loved, more than words can tell, this Spanish maid, who, I was sure, was unworthy an honest man's love.

CHAPTER XX

TELLS OF THE MEETING OF THOSE WHO SPOKE THE ENGLISH TONGUE

THIS truth, as I have said, came to me suddenly, for up to this moment no such thought had entered my mind. Rather, I had been angry with her, and had sometimes felt a great scorn for her; and although her somewhat changed demeanour had made me feel pity for her, the thought of love had never come into my mind. Now, however, I felt myself completely overcome. When I looked at her, as she spoke in anger to John Trenoweth, I forgot everything save the great love that burned in my heart for her, and the feeling of anger with myself for even thinking kindly of one who had forfeited all right to an honest man's regard. And yet I could not help myself. As I have said, she possessed a beauty and a power of fascination that I had never seen in a woman before. Her every movement, her every word made me not only feel the charm which every beautiful English maid of gentle birth possesses, but added to this was the loveliness which came of her Spanish blood. Reared as she had been, beneath the southern sun, there had come upon her a radiance of life which hitherto I had been a stranger to.

Thus it was that two feelings, antagonistic to each other, possessed me at the same time. On the one hand, I felt my heart on fire for love of her, and on the other I hated, not only myself, but her, for having made me love her.

Still I mastered myself. Turning, I saw Señor Toledo, who throughout our interview had scarce spoken a word, watching me closely, and even then, in spite of the new passion which possessed me, I found myself asking what all this talk tended to, and what was the reason for the señorita's changed behaviour. Moreover, at that moment, I thought of my mother, and, while it did not lessen one whit my new-found love, I found myself asking what my mother would think of her. I have heard it said that a man may live a lifetime in a minute, and it seemed to me, that this happened to me as I stood in that old house in Toledo.

"How dare you!" said the señorita a second time.

"I dare because you are the friend of your mother's enemies," said John Trenoweth. "I dare because on the day that I, by the mercy of God, saved my Esther—aye, snatched her as a brand from the burning—you were not by your mother's side. Because I find you here at the house of one of the Philistines."

I watched her closely while John spoke, and I saw that her face changed, although the purport of the change I could not tell.

"Listen, señors," she said presently, "and judge not without paying much heed to what I say. You accuse me of being forgetful of my duty towards my mother, but do you know all things! Nay, I *will* speak, Señor Toledo," and this she said looking towards this man, who seemed to be on the point of interfering. "I came to you, Master Hamstead, and to you, Master Killigrew, while you lay in prison. Aye, and for what? Was it that I cared aught for you, for either of you? Nay, you were naught to me. But I knew that you had just come from my *abuelo*, that is what you call grandfather. Señor Toledo had visited you, and had failed to make you obey his behests. You would not write the letter to Sir John Tremayne. Then, against his will, I came to you. Why? Did I care for Sir John Tremayne's money? Do I want money at all? Did I not tell you that I was going into the religious life? Aye, but they who hold the life of my mother—aye, and of Esther Truscott, too—in the hollow of their hands—nay, I will speak more plainly, the Englishman, Father Parsons, who makes even the archbishops and cardinals do his bidding, needs money, and I knew if I had money, or if Sir John Tremayne dowered his daughter with his possessions, I could buy my mother's life and liberty. Did I in aught care for you in all this? Ah, you do not know, you do not understand! Now say, if you will, that I cared not for my mother; now say, if you can, that I was unmindful of her or that I had in aught forgotten her."

"And think you," said Mawgan Killigrew, when she ceased speaking, "that we believe this?"

"And why will you not believe it?"

"Because you could give us no assurance that your mother would have her liberty, neither did nor could you say that you believed it. Because, when you came to us, you held out as a bribe a sort of promise that we should have our liberty, while now you say you thought not of us. And, for another thing, you do not desire your mother's liberty."

"I do not desire my mother's liberty!"

"Nay, because you told us that all heretics deserved the doom which your Church made them suffer."

"Aye, Master Killigrew, and what do you know of a woman's feelings?" asked Mistress Toledo; "think you that she would tell you all that was in her heart?"

"That I know not," replied Mawgan Killigrew, "for I be but little versed in the wiles of women. But I have spoken the truth. This I saw, she—nay, all of you—wanted Sir John Tremayne's wealth, and you thought that we should weakly write to him, saying, 'Sir John, we be prisoners awaiting a cruel death; our only chance of salvation is that you dower your daughter with all your possessions. This will also save her from torture and death.' I say this is the letter you would have us write, for you knew of no other means of persuading him, seeing that he doth hate the Spaniard and all his ways. But you thought that such a letter as this would answer your purpose, and then, possessing his estates, you would work your will on the señora and with the rest of us."

"There you wrong me," cried the señorita; "and now I will say what I have not said before. If that letter be written and Sir John Tremayne yields to its demands, I have a promise that my mother's life and Esther Truscott's life shall be spared; nay, more, that they shall be sent back to England. Aye, and would not my grandfather rejoice to give his wealth to save his daughter? Besides, is it wrong for that wealth to go to the people of God? Is it not right that it should be used for the conversion of the heretic and the heathen?"

"And why did you not say this before?" asked Mawgan, somewhat weakly I thought.

"Why? Because I was angry at the thought of asking at all, when we should command! Because I hated the thought that the daughter of Don Basilio Fernandio de Valencia should seem to have to make terms with those who have forsaken our Church and neglected her sacraments. Think you that it in aught gave me pleasure to go to you, heretics and spies, and say, 'Señors, do me a favour, I beseech you.' I, the child of the Valencias, go on my knees to you!"

At this neither of us spoke, Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth because they were filled with anger, and I because I was almost bereft of my reason.

"Now you understand why I did not tell you these things," she went on presently.

"And why have you told us now?" asked Mawgan.

"I will tell you why. It is because out of love for my

mother I have overcome my pride; because, although I—no, I will not say it—but I have told you why, señors. And now I ask you to help me save my mother from the Church's anger, as well as from the wrath of Father Parsons. You spoke truly when you said that Sir John Tremayne hateth all Spaniards, and that he will in naught yield to their desires. But if you, his friends, were to write such a letter, then could I, I feel sure, save my mother. Will you do this, señors? Will you not help me to save my mother's life?"

There was so much of passion and, at the same time, of tenderness in her words, that I felt like calling for pen and ink at the moment she spoke; but Mawgan Killigrew was not so minded.

"And why hath not your mother written?" he said. "Sir John Tremayne knows her handwriting, and would think kindly of a letter from her. Yet not a line hath she written."

At this she looked somewhat confused.

"Because my mother hath been obstinate," she said at length, "and would not do this even to save her life."

"Aye, and because she did not trust those who would rob her father of those estates which have belonged to the Tremaynes for many generations," cried Mawgan.

I saw that she was much angered at this: her face became much flushed, and her eyes burned like live coals, but she mastered herself, and went on almost beseechingly.

"But will you not help me, Master Killigrew? Remember it is not for myself I plead. It is for my mother's life; it is for the life of her serving-woman. Master Trenoweth, will you not join in my pleadings? Will you not, to have your sweetheart back again, do this? It seems my only chance. Only yesterday eve did Father Parsons say that, would my mother consent to gain what he desired, she should have her liberty."

At this both Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth looked much like yielding, while I, in spite of my anger, felt myself as but wax in her hands. I was about to open my mouth to say we would do this, when I caught sight of Señor Toledo's face, and then my heart became like stone again.

In his eyes was that greedy, cruel look which I had heard my father speak of, while his lips, cruel and contemptuous as they were, yet smiling with triumph at the victory he thought he had gained, made me see that he was but using this maid as a dainty bait wherewith to catch us. I saw that this man did not believe in the success of the

great Armada which was then preparing, neither did he care aught for religion. But he did desire Sir John Tremayne's estates, and he knew that, could he get the old Cornishman to dower his daughter, he could enrich himself, and yet keep friendly with the Church at the same time. At that time, moreover, it seemed to me that the señorita was in league with him, and that together they sought to play with us as a clever townswoman may play with country yokels.

And this, though my heart burned for the señorita, brought me to my senses. I knew that the Spaniard would not forgive heresy so easily, and I felt sure that, even although this might be done, neither Sir John's daughter, nor Esther Truscott, nor ourselves, would in aught be better conditioned.

It required, I say, but a look on Señor Toledo's face to see this. The mocking triumph of his lips, the greedy, cruel expression of his wicked old eyes, said it all as plainly as if he had sworn it on a sacred relic.

But neither Mawgan nor John saw aught of this; rather they kept their eyes on the señorita, who presently went on:

"Now also I see that I spoke wrongfully to you, for I did regard you as cowards who would do this to save your own lives, but now I know that you be brave gentlemen, fearing nothing for yourselves, and trusting to your own strong arms to lead you into safety. But because you be men of honour, and because strong men always love to help a woman, I know that what you would scorn to do for yourselves you will still do to save a woman, especially if she be of your own country. For my mother hath suffered much, aye, more than words can say, while Esther Truscott hath stood loyally by her. And I, too, señors, of whom you think so hardly; think you that I have had no sleepless nights; think you that my heart hath not been torn by anguish? But I plead not for myself—only for my mother and Esther my old nurse."

At this I saw Mawgan rise to his feet, all his opposition gone, and only obedience in his eyes, while even John Trenoweth, carried away as he afterwards told me by the thought of taking Esther Truscott back to Falmouth harbour, felt that there was no longer reason for refusal. But I, in spite of my love, aye, and in spite of the fact that I felt willing to be her slave for life, kept watching Señor Toledo's face, and when presently I heard him say, almost in spite of himself, but as it were under his breath, "*Madre de Dios! Magnificamente!*" I felt I could no longer keep silence.

Thus before Mawgan or John could in aught yield to her pleadings, I cried out angrily :

" No, we will not promise ! Mawgan, John Trenoweth, this is but a trick to make us do their wills ! "

I heard Señor Toledo utter a savage oath, but I went on :

" Can you not see, my comrades, that we have been brought here only to fall into the trap that they have set ? Can you not see that when we have done this they will have gained their ends, and will afterwards laugh at us, and still work their will upon the women ? Was not Sir John Tremayne's last warning ' Never trust a Spaniard's word ? ' Promise nothing, comrades, nothing. The God Who hath delivered us once can and will deliver us again."

" Aye, but my Esther," cried John Trenoweth, almost beside himself.

" We have saved her once, and we will, by the mercy of God, save her again," I cried. " Besides, that which took place in the Church of El Cristo de la Vega did not take place for naught."

At this the señorita rose to her feet, her eyes all ablaze, and her fists clenched. For a moment I thought she would have struck me, so angry was she ; but again she mastered herself, and turning to Mawgan, she said : " And will you obey the behests of this—this charlatan ? "

What would have happened after this I know not, for I heard Señor Toledo growling so angrily that I bethought me of a mad dog, especially when I saw him gnash his yellow teeth ; but at that moment a serving-man came in, announcing other visitors, and in less than a minute two priests came in, together with another man whom I had never seen before.

One of the two priests was Father Parsons. The other was the man who had visited us in our prison the night after we had saved Esther Truscott from the flames at the Circo Romano. I saw in a twinkling of an eye that Father Parsons judged how matters stood, and it required but half an eye to see his disappointment. As I believed then, and as I believe now, the whole of this business had been arranged beforehand, and Father Parsons had timed his visit so as to come to us when our consent had been obtained, or if not obtained, so nearly that he could overcome any obstacle which might still exist. I watched him as his eyes travelled from one to another, and presently, when his gaze rested upon me, a quick look of anger shot across his face. Then instinctively I turned my eyes towards the señorita, and, to my surprise, her anger seemed gone ;

rather a look half of fear and half of hatred seemed to have come over her.

"*Buenas noches,*" said Father Parsons presently. "Ah! blood is thicker than water, and even here in Toledo, far away from our little island home, I find men and women, all of whom speak English. Aye, and we late-comers speak English too, and I dare swear that beyond ourselves not ten people in the whole of Toledo, where two hundred thousand people have gathered together, know the tongue we are speaking. But what would you? I fear me that because of the sins of my land the language will soon die out, and in a few generations only a few in the city of London will know the English tongue."

This he said as if to make conversation possible, for he saw that we were much wrought upon. But no man spoke, whereupon he went on again.

"Do you know, Señor Toledo, that I did not know until to-day that your son spoke the English tongue? But he doth, Spaniard of Spaniards as he is. Aye, Pablo Toledo, look not darkly; you will find the language useful when Spain hath conquered England, and you become the possessor of one of our English castles. You will find it useful, moreover, when you seek to woo and to win one of the English dames."

Naturally this drew my attention to the man who had hitherto been a stranger to me, and then I saw that, had not Father Parsons so spoken, I should have known him to be the son of my father's old enemy. It is true he was of stouter form, and was wider across the shoulders than his father. Nevertheless, the face was the face of the man my father had described years before; for what Señor Toledo had been when he met my father in the London hostel in Mary's time, his son was that night in Toledo.

But it was not this fact so much that burned his features upon my memory. It was something which to me was of more importance, for when Father Parsons spoke jestingly to him concerning wooing and winning an English dame as his wife, I saw him look towards the Señorita de Valencia, and then I knew that I was not the only one who loved her. This man, son of my father's old enemy, loved her too, and, if ever man's face told of determination to win a woman, Pablo Toledo's face told me that he would stop at nothing to win Isabella de Valencia.

He was not a very young man; as I afterwards discovered, he was born in Spain before his father visited England in Mary's days, and that his mother had died at his birth. I learnt, too, that she was a proud passionate

woman, who had ruled even Señor Toledo with a rod of iron, so that this wily Spaniard seldom or never referred to his marriage with her.

"*Santa Padre,*" said this Spaniard, "there is only one country and one language for me. I shall never seek to woo an Englishwoman, and save for my duty to chastise the insolent English I should never leave Spanish shores. But even although I do go to England, my heart will remain in Spain—aye, remain in Toledo," and he bowed towards Isabella de Valencia.

She saw the action, and her face became as pale as death. Whether she loved him or no, I could not conjecture, but even then I felt that this man and I should meet again, although at that time he never dreamed that I should dare to cast my eyes upon her in love.

CHAPTER XXI

TELLS OF MY FIRST COMMAND TO ISABELLA DE VALENCIA, AND HOW SHE OBEYED IT

NEITHER Mawgan Killigrew nor John Trenoweth understood a word which Pablo Toledo the Spaniard had said, seeing he spoke in his own tongue; neither do I believe he guessed that I knew the meaning of his words. And in this I was confirmed immediately afterwards, for, seemingly without noting our presence, he went on in his grandiloquent Spanish way.

"Ah! this is no news to the señorita, seeing I have told her many times. It is true I have against my will been banished from the light of her eyes. Nevertheless, my heart hath ever been with her, even when as a soldier I have followed the fortunes of war. When her father, the noble Don Basilio Fernandio de Valencia, was alive, I asked her hand of him, but death cruelly intervened before his consent was obtained. My father, the noble Don Ferdinand Bernardo Toledo, having assumed guardianship over her, her mother being a heretic I have appealed to him, and he, doubtless influenced by En lish ways and remembering that the señorita hath English blood in her veins, hath told me that, can I win her consent, she shall be my wife. I have but lately returned to Toledo, having found favour with the King, and so here and now I place my fame and my fortune at her feet."

Now this speech angered me much, not only because of the mountebank way in which it was delivered, but because it seemed to me ill-advised to make an offer of marriage in a room full of people. But I have learnt that the Spaniards know but little of the reserved ways of the English, and that they speak loudly and freely of their affairs of heart even before casual acquaintances. It was, therefore, not so strange as I thought that he should speak of these things in the presence of strangers.

For a little time Isabella de Valencia was silent, but presently mastering those feelings which had brought fear to her eyes and pallor to her cheeks, she spoke quietly and calmly, even although I saw that Señor Toledo's eyes were fixed upon her.

"It is not for me to think of marriage, or of giving in marriage," she replied. "Already I have announced that I am to be the bride of heaven. When the day comes for me to enter a convent I shall renounce whatever worldly goods I may possess, and shall no more be known to those I have known and loved. I have but one work to accomplish, and then I shall for ever free myself from worldly hope and worldly fear."

"Pardon, señorita," said Pablo Toledo, passionately, "but the saints forbid that you should do this thing. It is not for the beautiful, such as you, to hide yourself from the world; it is for you to live in the world, and to give nerve to our arms and fire to our hearts. With the memory of your bright eyes ever with me, even I have done deeds which men call brave; hoping for your love, I have faced danger and death."

Had I not been filled with hot anger, I could have laughed at the fool, for if he had eyes to see he could understand that he was making her scorn him. But he heeded not this, and went on speaking.

"Whatever the señorita commands, that will I do, save only one thing. If she commands me to scale mountains, or go into the depths, I obey her. Dangers I defy, difficulties will not daunt me. One thing only I cannot do. I cannot cease to love her, and give up hope of winning her."

All this time both Señor Toledo and Father Parsons had spoken no word, but I saw that their eyes travelled from her to me, even as though they knew of the love which that night had come into my heart. I saw, moreover, that Father Parsons scorned the foolish ways of the Spaniard even as I did, and presently when he ceased speaking, he turned suddenly upon me, and said:

"Master Rupert Hamstead, you leave Toledo to-morrow."

My heart gave a leap, but I spoke no word.

"His gracious Majesty the King hath commanded that you be brought before him," he said.

This he said in English, so that both Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth also turned towards him.

"Aye, give thanks to the saints," he continued, as he noted their looks, "that such favour hath been showed to you. The marvellous happening in the Church of El Cristo de la Vega hath been communicated to him, and he desires to see you. This was foreseen, and for this reason you have been treated with great consideration."

"And do my friends also go?" I asked.

"Aye, and others," he replied, and I saw that his eyes rested on the Señorita de Valencia.

"And where is his Majesty?" I asked, but to this he gave no reply, and Señor Toledo, as though all interest in our interview had ended, gave orders that we be conducted to our prison. For prison it was, although in many ways we were not treated as prisoners. And the reason of this was plain, for, as I have said, the lifting of the arm of the statue in the Church caused us to be regarded as under the special protection of the saints. But for this we should doubtless have been thrown into some dark, filthy dungeon like that from which I had come, and submitted to torture. But the strange happenings had filled the Archbishop with awe, while even Father Parsons no longer spoke as before. Moreover, they knew that when the event should be reported to the King, he would at once desire to see us, and for this reason we were no longer regarded as heretics and spies, but men concerning whom heaven had intervened.

It is true neither Señor Toledo nor the señorita had spoken concerning it, but this, I believed, was because they were angry at what I had said.

It was at this time that a wild thought came into my mind concerning which even now I cannot help smiling. For the thing that came to me was so fraught with difficulties, and promised so little of good, that it might have been born in a madman's brain. Yet did I immediately act upon it, for in leaving the room I passed close by the señorita, who at that moment stood alone.

"I would see you alone," I said. "If you love your mother, arrange a meeting, and that without delay."

This I said in a low voice so that no one but she could hear, but she spoke not in answer; rather, she gave me an angry look as though she were sore displeased. Nevertheless, I added a meaning glance to my words, and then passed close behind Mawgan Killigrew, who had been exchanging a few words with Father Parsons and Señor Toledo.

Presently we found ourselves in our prison again, and when we were sure we were alone Mawgan Killigrew spoke freely.

"Rupert, you have saved us this night," he said.

"Aye, and how?" I asked.

"Because you spoke the truth at the right moment," he made answer. "God save us, but she made a baby of us. I had it on my lips to promise whatever she asked, and had you not spoken the thing would have been done. Have you ever seen a spider watching a fly? Have you

seen how the poor little fly hath been drawn to the web, and then pounced upon ? Aye, but John Trenoweth and I were like that. When she pleaded I could do nothing but obey. But my eyes were opened when you spoke. I saw the rage in Señor Toledo's face ; I saw that we had been led to a trap, and that but for you we should have fallen into it."

" Aye," I replied sullenly, for I was in an ill-humour. Even then I fancied that she might have smiled on me had I done her bidding, and that for my refusal I had made her my enemy for ever. I believed that all Mawgan had said was true, and yet at that moment I would have written the letter with my own hand, were I sure that thereby I could have won her smile.

For such is the power which a woman hath over a man. In many ways she is weak compared with him. Her hands are soft and she cannot do battle, neither do I think she can overcome a difficulty of the mind like a man can. Saving our gracious Queen Elizabeth, women be not wise rulers ; neither can they weigh as in a balance the great issues which make or mar the life of peoples. Nevertheless, they can play with men even as a cat plays with a mouse. Even then, although I had refused to do her bidding and defeated her when she seemed nearest to victory, I felt as though I would gladly face an army to win from her a look of admiration. I knew that I despised her ; aye, and hated her, too, for that matter—for was she not the plaything of the Jesuits and an inhuman daughter ?—and yet my heart burned for her, and I longed to take her hands in mine and tell her that I loved her.

" Aye," I repeated presently, " I believe it was all arranged between them, and Father Parsons came in at that moment believing that his desires would be accomplished —but what then ? The end is not yet, my masters. We came to save the Señora de Valencia and Esther Truscott, and as yet we have done nothing. Instead, we be in prison, and but for the strange happening in El Cristo de la Vega we should ere this have been burnt like dried wood."

" Aye, but there hath been the strange happening, Master Rupert Hamstead," cried John Trenoweth. " The Lord hath taken care of us, and He *will* take care of us. He hath closed the lion's mouth once, He hath closed it twice, and shall we doubt Him ? Nay, He is doing marvellous things for us. Are we not called before the King ? Shall we not have to travel where he is ? Can we not gain our liberty—aye, and the liberty of those we came to save ? Shame on you to doubt Him ! "

"Well spoken, John," cried Mawgan. "Father Parsons said that we go with others. What doth that mean? I tell you it means that God is giving us a great opportunity. But enough! It is now midnight, and I need sleep."

With that both Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth laid themselves down on mattresses which had been placed for us, and in a few minutes fell asleep. I, however, could not do this. For one thing, I could not help thinking much of what had taken place, as well as of the position in which we stood. I had neither the calm confidence of Mawgan Killigrew, nor the religious faith of John Trenoweth. I saw that Father Parsons had spoken the truth when he told me that we had placed our heads in the lion's mouth, and for the life of me I could not see how we were to get them out if we were to accomplish the work we had set ourselves to do. Besides, although what I had said to the Señorita de Valencia seemed the words of a madman, I could not help wondering what she thought of them. That she was angry with me I knew right well, for had I not thwarted her in the thing upon which she had set her heart? That she could in no way think well of me was just as plain. By her own confession she hated all Englishmen, and she hated heretics; thus, because I was an Englishman and a heretic, she must hate me. And yet I caught myself believing that she would pay heed to my request. It stood to reason that she must care something for her mother, even although she had been taught to regard all who were not of her faith as heathens; and thus because I had appealed to her through her mother I nourished in my heart the hope that she would grant my bidding.

All this and much more passed through my mind as Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth lay fast asleep, and so much did my hopes gain upon me that presently, when I heard a noise outside the door, I did not awake my companions, but rather crept towards the door like a man fearing to make a noise.

A moment later I saw a faint streak of light shoot upon the wall, and then I knew that someone had come to visit us.

"Señor Hamstead!"

It was a man's voice. This I knew, although my name was spoken in a whisper.

"Yes," I replied in a low voice. "Who are you, and what would you?"

"Make no noise, but come."

"Where? With whom?" I asked.

"It is not for me to tell you. Come."

I looked through the aperture, and saw a man dressed as a priest. In his hand he carried a candle, which shed a pale, sickly light.

"Come at once, or your desire may not be granted," he said.

Regardless of consequences, I left the room while my companion carefully locked the door behind him. A moment later I followed him along a dark passage, while I heard him whispering as if to himself, "*Dios perdon! Perdon Dios! Dios perdon!*"

"The man is afraid," I thought, and this gave me greater boldness.

"Where go we?" I asked presently.

"*Yo temo, yo tengo temo!*" he replied tremblingly.

"What do you fear?" I asked.

"*El pecado, y la pena,*" he whispered.

"What sin? What punishment?" I asked.

To this he made no reply, but led the way until we came to a vaulted door. This he opened, and admitted me into a small chapel. All around taper lights were burning before the images of saints and of the Virgin Mary, while the odour of incense filled the place.

Never in my life do I remember such deadly silence. Not even when I was confined in the loathsome dungeon, for there the crawling vermin made a noise. Here nothing broke the deathly stillness, and so awesome was it that when the taper lights rose and fell I felt as though surely the spirits of the dead were visiting the shrines which had been dedicated to their memory.

The priest, on entering the chapel, made his way towards the altar, where he knelt tremblingly and crossed himself. This done, he rose to his feet and beckoned me.

As the light from the altar rested upon his face I saw that he was the same man who had visited us with the señorita, and who, although he had spoken no word, had accompanied Father Parsons and Pablo Toledo to the house of my father's old enemy. I saw, too, by the look in his eyes, that the fear which he had expressed as we came thither was no make-believe. His every movement, the ghastly pallor of his cheeks, the tremor of his lips, suggested terror.

"Bow, man! Kneel and pray!" he whispered.

"Bow to what?" I asked.

"To the altar!" he replied. "Ask for forgiveness!"

"Forgiveness for what?" I asked. "I have done no wrong."

"Nay, but I have," he made answer. "Aye, and you

have done wrong, too. You are a heretic. You kneel not before the altar; you adore not the image of our Lord. I tell you this is sin—sin—black, damning sin! I tell you the spirits of the dead are here; they are watching us! Don't you see them? They fill the place! I can see their faces, and they are angry with us. It is desecration to come to the house of God and not to kneel in prayer! Kneel, man, kneel!"

"Aye," I replied, "I will kneel and ask forgiveness for my sins. But I cannot pray to saints or virgins!"

Whereupon I knelt down and uttered aloud the prayer of my heart.

"Great God," I prayed, "for Thy Son's sake, forgive my sins, and guide me and strengthen me, that I may accomplish the work that Thou hast given me to do. Amen."

Why I did this at the moment I can scarcely tell, for, although I have been a praying man all my life, I was never one to parade the fact for others to see. And yet, as I stood there in the silent chapel, the fearful face of the priest close to mine, and his frenzied appeal ringing in my ears, I could not refrain from kneeling and offering the prayer of my heart.

"Do you believe that God hath sent you to Spain?" he asked.

"Aye, I believe He hath," I replied.

"And do you believe He will help you?"

"Aye, I believe He will," I repeated.

"Never! never!" replied the priest. "The thing is sin—sin. Black, damning sin! Let the Church do her work. Let it burn out error and unbelief. It is the only way; it is the will of God!"

"Nay, the burning of those I have come to save would be the will of the devil," I answered.

"Hush! Blaspheme not. The Church of God can do no wrong, and accursed be he who lifteth the puny arm of rebellion against her almighty mandates. Listen, man, listen! Haste back to your accursed country. I will help you to do this. I will—I will!"

"Have you brought me here to tell me this?" I asked.

"Nay, nay! God forgive me—I have not. I have sinned in that I have brought you here—that is, unless I can bring you to repentance."

"I trust I do repent," I said.

"Aye, but of what? Do you repent of the foul lies which have crept into your country ever since Henry VIII.

of evil memory defied the Holy Father in order to satisfy his vile lusts? Have you repented the accursed crimes against the Church which have become your watchwords ever since that she-wolf hath become your Queen?"

"Silence, Master Priest!" I said angrily. "He who speaketh ill against our Queen is a liar! Mark that, my man, a liar. She is a good Queen, a great Queen, and hath been sent by God to reign in equity."

"Do you say that?" he said, half in astonishment, half in pity. "Then there is no hope for your people. God will answer our prayers. He will give Spain the power to wipe your people from off the earth. We are chosen of God to do this. It is His will. He hath given us might and majesty. We are the safeguards of the one Holy Faith, and our armies shall go everywhere from victory to victory until we rule the entire world, and cause every unbeliever to accept the one true faith."

He seemed like one communing with his own soul rather than speaking to me, and yet I thought he had a purpose in speaking thus.

"Then how do you account for the fact that Admiral Drake hath driven you before him, like the wind drives dry sand?" I asked.

"Man, these are but foul lies. Your cup of iniquity runneth over, and your doom is certain. Yet must I do this thing."

"What thing?" I asked. "You have led me thither, yet have you not told me why."

"Aye, and we are in the house of God, too," he replied, in a fearful whisper. "You have scorned God's chosen servants even in His own sanctuary. Come away—come away now, if you will not here renounce your heresy and accept the doctrines of the one true Church. Will you, man, will you? Then shall I know that God will forgive me for bringing you thither."

"Aye," I replied, "I do accept the doctrines of the Church of God; those which are plainly taught in His holy Word, but none other, Master Priest—none other!"

"Then must I bear the sin of bringing you thither, and I must suffer for seeking to do the will of unbelievers. But I will not countenance the thing; no, I will not. I will stay here and pray! Aye, though I bring you here, I will pray that your desires may not be fulfilled. Though I make it possible for you to seek to deliver those who for many days have bidden defiance to the will of the Church, I will pray that your counsels may be blinded and your desire brought to naught. Oh, God forgive me, God forgive

me! Come, the will of the Lord be done; and surely He will laugh at your calamities, and mock when your fear cometh."

All this he said in a voice that trembled much. Nevertheless, he led me to a door at the side of the little chapel.

"Enter," he said, "enter. I have pleaded with you; I have besought you to turn to God. Your blood be upon your own head!"

With that he opened the door, and presently I found myself in a small room, which I soon saw was the sacristy of the little chapel. At first I thought I was alone, for so dimly lighted was the place that I could not plainly discern the things therein. But presently my heart gave a great leap, for there, right before me, stood the woman who had become all the world to me.

CHAPTER XXII

HOW I COMMENCED MY WOOING

"WHAT do you desire?" she asked. "Tell me quickly."

"What do I desire?" I repeated like one who has just awakened out of a dream. For so suddenly did she seem to appear, and so quickly did she speak, that for a moment my head was all dazed.

"Aye, what do you desire? You told me that you would see me alone. You asked me, for my mother's sake, to make it possible for us to speak together. Now what would you?"

To this question I knew not what to answer. For, truth to tell, when I asked her to do this thing, I had little in my heart save the desire to speak to her alone. I wanted to be with her, and to feast my eyes upon her face. Thus it was that I stood dumb, while all will and purpose seemed to have left me.

"Señorita," I stammered presently, "I desire to thank you for thus listening to my words. I would also pray you to forgive the harsh words I have spoken to you."

"This is but foolishness," she said. "I listened to you only that I hoped by so doing I might save my mother. As to forgiving you, no, I do not. I never will!"

Her voice trembled as she spoke, and I knew that she was much wrought upon.

"What have you in your mind?" she went on eagerly. "You came from England to save my mother. I tell you it is impossible, save in the way I have told you of. And this you have refused. Still, I will listen to you. What plans have you made? Remember, you are a prisoner. You are closely guarded, and when you are outside the walls of your prison your every movement will be watched. But it is said here in Spain that an Englishman will never admit that he is beaten, and that he never gives up hope."

"That is true, señorita. Never! I came to deliver your mother, and by the help of God I will deliver her."

At this her eyes gleamed brightly, but only for a moment.

"You cannot succeed," she said; "you cannot—never, never! It is not right that you should. Oh, that my

mother would repent! Oh! I am doing wrong in seeking to act against the will of God, for His blessing can never rest on anything which is against the will of the Church."

"I do not understand," I said. "Do you mean that it would not be right for her to escape faggot and flame and be taken home to her father's house?"

"How can it be, when she defies the ministers of God, and refuses the loving-kindnesses of the Church? You do not know, señor. For my father's sake, her sins of unbelief were disregarded during his lifetime; but she remains obdurate even now: she refuses to believe. Is it not my duty therefore, even although I am her daughter, to say, 'She is joined to her idols; let her alone'? But what would you, señor—what would you? You have refused to do the one thing whereby the Church would be merciful: what would you do—now?"

"I would ask you to make it possible for me to take her away," I replied. "As for writing the letter, you know why neither I nor Mawgan Killigrew could do it. We should, thereby, if Sir John Tremayne were to yield to our requests, make over his wealth to the Spaniards, we should become the tools of the Jesuits, and we should help on those things which we loathe. Besides, in spite of what you say, I do not believe that she would be set at liberty. The Jesuits, after gaining their desires, would still feel it their duty to burn her for the glory of God."

"But I have had their promises!"

"A fig for their promises!" I said. "We have heard of their promises before, and we know the way they keep them. Aye, and you know it, too," I cried, with sudden anger; for I felt that she was but a willing tool in their hands.

"I know?" she repeated.

"Aye, you know. You be but the cat's-paw of these men. For months you have stood by while your mother and Esther Truscott have suffered, and all the time you have had it in your power to set them at liberty."

"I had power?"

"Aye, you! Else how could you get me here even now, or how could you have visited me five nights ago? Had you a daughter's love, even as you have a woman's wit, you would long since have found means whereby they could have gone to England."

At this she was struck dumb. She did not speak for some time, and when she opened her mouth, it was only to stammer weakly—

"I am the child of the Church, señor, and when my time is come I shall go into religion."

"Aye, and leave your mother and your old nurse with these masters of torture!" I cried. "So much do you love your mother that you would see her tortured, burned!"

And this I said with great scorn, although all the time I longed to take her in my arms and tell her that I loved her.

"How dare you!" she cried. "How dare you, an English heretic, speak so to a child of Spain? Look, man, do you know that I have but to speak the word, and you, in spite of all that hath taken place, would go to your torture without more ado."

"Then speak it!" I said, for my heart was hot at the way she spoke.

She looked straight at me, her eyes blazing with anger.

"Aye, speak it!" I went on. "It would become you well. Speak the word, and it would agree with the rest of your actions. For months you have stood by while your mother hath suffered; for months you have kissed the hands which have forged the hell tools that have been placed upon her limbs; and now you would go further. You would have us put more power into the Jesuits' hands; you would use your mother's sufferings as a means of gaining your grandfather's possessions, and put it into the hands of Parsons, the arch-enemy of England. And all this time, while you have lived in ease and luxury, your mother hath been suffering. Aye, go, fawn on Parsons the Jesuit. Kiss the hands of Señor Toledo, whose tool you are, and urge that we, who have come from afar to deliver your mother, may suffer as she hath suffered. It would be worthy of you, Mistress Isabella."

As I spoke I saw her change colour again and again. Deathly pallor and blood red rage followed each other in quick succession, and when I ceased she seemed for a moment unable to speak.

"How I hate you! Oh, how I hate you!" she cried presently.

"Aye, that also I expected," I said, and then I was, as it were, swept almost off my feet by the great yearning which possessed me. Almost mad with anger as I was, I could have crawled before her. Scorning her, despising her, as I did, I yet worshipped her.

"Aye, I expected it," I went on, scarcely realising the purport of the words which passed my lips. "Think you I have not seen this? Think you I did not know it when that priest came to me less than an hour ago? He hath

been chosen by you as your messenger before. Even now he is praying for my destruction in the chapel. Oh, yes, I know you hate me because I will not do your bidding, because I refuse to be your lackey. Aye, but you will not always hate me!"

"Aye, I will—always, always!"

"No, you will not," I cried, carried away by my passion. "You will not be able. Instead, you will love me, even as I love you!"

"Love you—you love me!" she repeated, like one distraught.

"Aye," I replied. "You will love me, and, more, you will become my wife! My love will conquer you. You will do my bidding, mistress—aye, do it, not only willingly, but gladly."

For answer she laughed in my face.

"Say I will marry the lackey who cleans my boots, say I will obey scullery wenches, and you will be nearer the truth"; and again she laughed like one full of merriment.

"I despise myself for caring aught for you," I said, "for you are unworthy of an honest man's love. You are half a Spaniard, and a Jesuit tool and spy. You have connived at your mother's sufferings, and have been a doormat to such as Father Parsons and Toledo, but God hath led me to love you, unworthy as you are. And you will love me—aye, and obey me, too, mistress; yes, obey me! Do you hear? Obey me! You will not go into religion, as you call it, and you will not pay heed to the court of Pablo Toledo."

This I said against my will. Aye, and not believing a word of it all, yet carried away so much was I that I could not help myself.

"You are mad," she cried, "mad! Else would I even now call the soldiers, and have you tortured."

"No, you would not," I replied. "You dare not. Do it, if you dare. I will not hinder you. The door is not locked. The priest is waiting to do your behests—see, I make way for you to go to him!"

But she did not move; rather she seemed fixed to the earth, while all the time her great dark eyes were fastened on me.

And now we had changed places. It was I who laughed at her, and God forgive me! but my laugh was cruel, mocking.

"You are afraid of me now," I went on. "Afraid, although I am a prisoner, and you have authority. Shall

I tell you why? It is because I am stronger than you, and because you know that, while I am doing right, you are doing wrong. No, I am not thinking of bodily strength. That is naught at such a time as this. Even now, you dare not refuse anything I ask!"

"Dare I not?" she answered. "Try me, master boasting madman, try me."

"Aye, I will try you, and you will obey me. Not because you love me, for that time hath not yet come, but because you fear me, and because, in refusing me, you would prove more unworthy than ever to be called the daughter of an Englishwoman."

"Command me, then," she cried. "Command me, and mark my answer!"

"Yes, I will give my commands in my own time, and that will be right soon. But there is something else first. You go with your mother and Esther Truscott, as they accompany us to-morrow to see the King. That I know."

This was a bow drawn at a venture, but the arrow struck true. She gave a start, and looked at me half in wonder, half in fear; but, even against her will, she bowed in acquiescence.

"Even although you tremble at Father Parsons' commands, and are a willing lackey to the Church, you have still some feeling for your mother," I said. "You have enough of English blood in your veins for that. Well, your mother is to be set free to-morrow, and you are to help me to set her free."

"How?" she cried, scornfully and angrily, and yet, as I thought, eagerly.

"In this way," I said. "We are to be taken to King Philip to-morrow, under escort."

"Aye, and a strong escort," she cried. "Señor Pablo Toledo will command it."

"But it will not be too strong," I said. "You will see to that. And more. We are to be taken to the King, not as prisoners, but as men on whose behalf the saints have intervened, and who have been delivered by Heaven."

"Well, and then?" she asked eagerly, for she appeared to have forgotten that she had defied me to make her obey me.

"Then Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth and I must go armed."

"Armed?"

"Aye, armed. When I came to Spain I wore my

father's sword. It must be returned, and their swords must be returned. We will wear long cloaks, and thus, if needs be, they can be hidden from Pablo Toledo's sight, but we must have them. Moreover, we do not go with shackles on our wrists, but unfettered. This will be in accordance with the King's will."

"And then?"

"When the right time comes we will set your mother and Esther Truscott free."

"You will escape, all escape?" she questioned like one in a trance.

"Aye, Mawgan Killigrew will escape, and so will John Trenoweth. For me, I want to see the King."

"It is impossible, impossible!"

"Nay, it is not impossible: it must be. It is at your peril that you refuse."

I saw her trembling from head to foot, while her eyes gleamed with an unearthly light.

"Oh, how I hate you!" she said presently.

"That may be," I said; "but you will do my bidding, mistress—you will do my bidding."

"Are you not afraid that God will strike you dead?"

"God is on my side," I replied, "and it is because He wills it that you will do this thing."

And this I said firmly, and quietly, as though her defiance were out of the question.

Again she lifted her eyes to mine, while my heart seemed like a flame of fire. I had spoken roughly, cruelly, to her, while all the time I longed to woo her with tender words, even although I scorned myself for loving her.

"And now I must go," I said. "You know your work—you know what you must do. *Hasta mañana, señorita,*" and I bowed to her with mock reverence.

"Oh, how I hate you!" she repeated.

"Aye, to-night," I replied, with a laugh, "to-night. My time is not yet come, but it will come—it will. '*Hay un mañana*'—that is your own proverb, señorita: 'There is a to-morrow,' and then you will love me; meanwhile, you will obey."

Then I left her standing alone in the little sacristy. I dared not turn back. Did I, I should have demeaned myself before her. I should have pleaded for forgiveness on my bended knees, such was the feeling that came over me. For though I had defied her, and commanded her—aye, and flouted her—she was such a woman as I had never seen before. Undutiful as a daughter as she might be, cat's-paw of the priests as I believed she was, she was still as

beautiful as an angel to me. Aye, and noble too, although all my reasoning told me she was not. For woman is so made that, to the man who loves her, she can defy reason, and laugh at all the wisdom of the schoolmen.

When I entered the little chapel, the priest was kneeling at the altar, and so lost was he in his devotions that he noted not that I stood by his side. His face was pale and agonised, his body as rigid as that of a dead man.

"Wake up, Master Priest, and take me back to my friends," I said.

He rose to his feet quickly.

"You have seen her, spoken to her?" he asked, fearfully.

"Aye."

"And——" He looked at me as if waiting for me to answer the question which he dared not utter.

"She hath defied me," I said.

"Aye, defied you! Then the saints be praised, for they have answered my prayers. Come, Señor Hamstead, and thank God for His mercies."

With this he led me back to the prison from which I had come, never speaking a word to me, but muttering to himself all the while.

When we came to the door, he unlocked it quietly, and then turned as if to leave me.

"The señorita——" I said.

"She hath defied you," he replied. "Those were your own words."

"Yes, she defied me, laughed me to scorn. But doth she remain in the sacristy?"

"No; there is a way by which she can get to her own chamber. She knoweth it well. The chapel is a private one belonging to the palace, and she goeth thither often."

"I think she may desire to see you before she sleeps," I said. "You will tell her that I told you how she defied me."

"Aye," he replied, "I will tell her."

For a long time I sat alone with my thoughts. I did not wake Mawgan nor John Trenoweth. The former slept soundly, making neither movement nor sound, but John Trenoweth was evidently dreaming of his sweetheart, for he called her by name, and spoke loving words, just as a fond boy might speak to the maid he loved first, even while he held her in his arms.

"He is happy," I said to myself, "and I will not awaken him. There is no need. Besides, God knows what to-morrow may bring forth. Let him be happy while he can,

but I must speak with Mawgan; I must tell him all that it is necessary for him to know."

Whereupon I woke him, and then I whispered to him much that had taken place, but even to him I could not speak of the love which had come into my heart, or what I had said to the Spanish maid concerning it.

"God be praised!" said Mawgan, when I had finished. "This is as it should be, Rupert. While I have been sleeping thou hast been thinking and acting. Aye, but it is a good plan, and there will be fighting to-morrow."

"Fighting," I repeated, "aye, and hard fighting too, or I am much mistaken. I much fear the end of it all." For now that I had thought it all over, the plan seemed truly a madman's.

"Nay, nay," replied Mawgan gleefully. "But all will be well. Think of it! To feel my sword in my hand again, and a good horse under me! Why, it will be heaven. Only in one thing art thou wrong, Rupert."

"And that?"

"We must all escape together. We three, side by side, having the women with us, can defy them all. But you must not leave us, lad. Together we came, and together we will return."

"If we return at all, God will work a miracle for us," I said. "But I have a feeling that we shall be separated. But what of that? If you can give Sir John Tremayne his daughter, and John Trenoweth can have his sweetheart, we shall not have come in vain. But the plan may come to naught."

"It will not—it must not—it shall not!" cried Mawgan. "What if we are few against many? We shall fight in the open air, man—that is the thing, that is the thing!"

"Aye, it will be glorious—that is, if the maid loves her mother enough to do my bidding."

"She must, I tell you. She hath English blood in her veins, and it will tell. But we must go together, lad, all together!"

To this I made no reply; for, in truth, I had other things in my mind than to find out the King's plans concerning England. I felt I cared not to leave Spain if I had to leave Isabella de Valencia behind.

But I told nothing of this to Mawgan, even although we talked long together concerning the work we had to do.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW WE TRAVELLED TOWARDS THE PALACE OF THE KING

IT all came about even as I had willed. How, I know not, for our movements, when daylight came, were shrouded in mystery. There were many messengers who came into our apartment, and while, on the one hand, they treated us as though we were prisoners, I thought I detected at times more courtesy than was common. But this I found. Before the doors were opened for us to commence our journey I saw near the entrance a mysterious parcel, which on examination proved to be long cloaks, reaching almost to our heels, together with our swords.

"This augurs well," cried Mawgan, handling his blade lovingly. "Well, I tell you! Your words have had weight, Rupert, and the maid hath not altogether ceased to love her mother."

"Aye," broke in John Trenoweth, "and I shall be near Esther to-day. Think of it, my masters—think of it!"

For I had told John Trenoweth something of what had taken place. I had also bidden him be ready for strange events. I did this because, in spite of the joy in John's heart, and the confidence in Mawgan's, I was in great fear. For, as I have said before, I am one who dreads much what may take place, even though I know nothing of it when those very things I have dreaded come upon me.

We were led, I remember, to the Plaza de la Constitucion, which was close to the palace, under a strong guard, and, having reached this spot, I saw a great concourse of people, who seemed much desirous of seeing us. For there was that in their eyes and their reverent behaviour which showed me that the scene in El Cristo de la Vega still remained in their memories.

"They are under the protection of the saints," I heard it whispered again and again. "The arm was uplifted, I tell you, and the King is desirous of seeing and speaking with them."

I saw, too, that Pablo Toledo was in command, and that both he and his soldiers were fully armed. Pablo was in gay attire, too, and he strutted vainly about, like a man well pleased with himself, as I have no doubt he was.

Presently he became impatient, even as I was, for no-

where did I see Isabella de Valencia or her mother. He looked again and again towards the palace, muttering fiercely. At length I became much afraid that they might be too ill to take a long journey on horseback, but before long my anxiety came to an end, for three women came towards us, their faces all carefully hidden by a kind of headgear which the Spaniards call a mantilla. I quickly saw, moreover, that they were the women I had expected to see, for Isabella de Valencia was not easy to mistake, while such was the impression that the other two made upon me at the Circo Romano, that I was not likely to forget them. I saw, too, by the look on John Trenoweth's face that he had recognised his sweetheart, for I heard him say again and again:

"Now may God be praised! May God be praised!"

"Mount your horses quickly!" cried Pablo Toledo. "Quickly, I say. Soldiers, guard the prisoners carefully. *Hacia adelante!*"

Whereupon we mounted our horses, which were well-fed, strong-limbed animals, and this rejoiced me much, especially when I saw that the soldiers under Pablo Toledo's command were to ride upon mules, which, while strong and sure-footed, were not so fleet as horses.

Often did I look towards the Señorita de Valencia, but she gave me neither word nor look, save once, and then it was a look of scorn and anger, not unmixed, I thought, with derision. Neither did we get a word with the other women; for, as I have said, their faces were well concealed and they seemed to act as though they were in a dream.

We were a silent procession as we passed down the steep hillside towards the river, for the morning was cloudy, and, as I thought, threatened rain, and I doubt not all felt the gravity of our situation. The people, I remember, followed us some distance; some murmuring that the King would be gracious to us, and others saying that we should all be committed to the flames, seeing that, in spite of the smiles of heaven, we were still English, and had defied Spain and her religion.

This part of the journey, moreover, was more difficult than any other, for the road to the river was very steep and badly made, so that even the mules had to pick their steps carefully, but presently we reached a bridge called the Puente de Alcantara, which, I have been told, is one of the oldest bridges in the world, and was built by Wamba in the far back past. In crossing this bridge, moreover, I saw what an impregnable city Toledo was; for, as I have said, the river nearly encircled it and ran along a great

gorge, which from side to side was well-nigh two hundred feet. Thus, the waters being deep and rapid, and the gorge being, as the Spaniards said, *muy profundo*, neither man nor horse could enter the city except with great difficulty.

Just after we crossed the river, I saw on the roadside a statue erected to Wamba, to which the soldiers lifted their caps as though they regarded it with great reverence, and it was then I was able to estimate the strength of our guard. For the people followed us no further than the bridge, where, after they had given the Spanish salute, Go with God, they returned to the city.

"Nine besides Toledo," whispered Mawgan to me. "Three to one, and one over. Man, we live, we live!"

I shook my head, for though the guard was not large, I did not see how we could overpower them and escape with the women. Nevertheless, I felt my blood tingling, and my arms becoming hard.

Whether Pablo Toledo knew we wore swords or no I am not sure, for our long capes covered us completely. Moreover, he paid but little heed; instead, he devoted all his time to Isabella de Valencia, who, as I thought, received his attentions gladly. More than once I saw her look up into his face with a gay laugh on her lips, especially when he seemed to say something that was gay and witty. This, as may be imagined, made me angry and sore at heart, for, situated as we were, I was in a fit humour to be jealous, especially when I remembered the words she had spoken to me the previous night.

I saw ere long that we were going in the direction of Madrid, at which place, I presently learned, we were to stay that night, and as the distance between the two cities was about sixteen leagues, I judged that we could not get there until after dark. Especially was this so when I saw the rate at which we were travelling. For what with the condition of the roads, which was as bad as it could be, and the fact that Pablo Toledo was content to amble slowly by the side of Isabella de Valencia, I felt sure that we were not covering more than four or five miles an hour. In addition to this the days had now become short, the darkness beginning to appear not long after six o'clock.

I said nothing to Mawgan concerning the many thoughts that were passing through my mind. In truth, I could not if I would, for the soldiers rode too near; nevertheless, I saw by the look in his eyes that he was thinking deeply, and would be ready for action at any moment. As for John Trenoweth, he kept his eyes steadily upon Esther Truscott, while his lips constantly moved as in prayer.

A little past noon we stopped for our midday meal, near a little place called Cabañas, and after this the sun shone brightly, which caused a little more cheerfulness in our party. Two or three soldiers sang songs of love and battle, while Pablo Toledo continued to pay court to Isabella de Valencia. Never once did she seek to go to her mother's side, and although I am sure the señora felt pain and weariness at such unwonted exercise, her daughter appeared entirely callous and unthoughtful.

When the afternoon had become somewhat advanced, I saw that Pablo Toledo seemed more anxious. He looked often at the position of the sun, and urged his soldiers to go faster.

"But the roads are bad, señor capitan," replied one of the soldiers at length. "They are full of pits and holes, and did we go fast and a horse put his foot into one of them, his leg would snap like a reed."

"What!" cried Pablo Toledo haughtily; "dare you answer me back, you dog! Another word, and I will tie you to a post, and have you horsewhipped. Forward, faster, I say!"

To this the soldiers made no answer, but although they urged the horses forward I saw the look of angry defiance in the men's eyes, for the Spaniard, however low of degree, loves to be treated as a *caballero*, and brooks not threatening language.

Presently Mawgan found means of coming to my side. "Is it not time to act?" he said in a low whisper.

"Not yet," I replied. "We cannot get to Madrid until an hour after dark. We must therefore wait until after sunset, and if possible escape in the darkness."

At this a soldier rode between us, for, owing to the condition of the road, we had drawn near together. From time to time I looked carefully around me to see the condition of the country, and again I was impressed with the sadness of the scene. For Spain even under bright sunshine is not such a land as I had expected. I had heard of it as the home of sunshine, and laughter, and song; but it is not. It is very grey, and barren, and forbidding. Both here and southward it is a very mournful country. In many parts, and for many miles, it is treeless and well-nigh verdureless. It is true that here and there you may find beautiful spots, but on the whole it is a stern, melancholy country, with long, far-stretching plains, barren, rugged mountains, and terribly lonesome valleys. Unlike our own country, it has neither groves nor hedges, and while one can often hear the shriek of the eagle or the cry of the buzzard, the voice of

the singing bird is seldom heard. Neither are the mouths of its people filled with laughter; rather they are a somewhat sad race, given much to melancholy and solitude. Even that day, when the sun was shining, although two or three of the soldiers gave vent to song, the others rode in solemn silence as though they regarded laughter as beneath the dignity of the soldiers of so great a nation.

"How far are we from Madrid, señor?" I asked presently of one of the soldiers.

"Two, perhaps three hours or more, excellency," he replied.

"Must we get there to-night?"

He nodded his head, and then, as I saw the sun sinking behind a ridge of hills, I gave Mawgan Killigrew a look which caused the fire to come into his eyes.

"When?" he asked, not heeding the soldier's look.

"I will give you the sign," I replied.

"What said your excellency?" asked the soldier.

"You will know when you conquer our country and learn our language," I made answer.

"Aye, and that will be soon," he replied haughtily. "But be your English señoritas fair, excellency, as fair as the women of Spain?"

"I prophesy that you will lose your heart the day you land on English shores," I replied.

"Oh!" he cried in high good humour, "but I will let your English señoritas know what a Spanish soldier is like. I will show them that we are not only fighters, but lovers."

As he spoke my heart gave a great leap, for near us I saw a party of what I felt sure were gipsies. The sun had now set, and ere long I knew it would be dark. The country, moreover, was lonesome beyond words, no human habitation being in sight save a castle perched upon a peak some three miles away.

"See?" I said to Mawgan. "Remember Inez!"

I knew then that he also had seen the gipsies, and had drawn his own conclusion. We had now entered a rocky valley, while I noted that the gipsies likewise made their way thitherward. I urged my horse forward, while Mawgan and John, at a sign from me, did the same, until we had placed ourselves in front of the women. I had also drawn my sword from its sheath, hiding it, however, beneath my cloak, and held myself in readiness.

We had not gone far into the valley before it became much darker, and this was doubtless owing to the great rugged rocks on our left throwing their dark shadows upon us.

"Ready!" I cried, as suddenly as the report of a musket; and immediately we rushed upon three of the men who, unprepared for our attack, fell before us without resistance. In a moment the whole party was in confusion. Pablo Toledo, who had ridden by Isabella de Valencia's side almost unheedingly, now swore a savage oath and rushed forward.

"Ah, traitors!" he cried savagely. "You would escape, would you?" And he struck at me furiously.

I parried his blow, and so wheeled my horse that I had him at an advantage; at least, I thought I had, but I had not reckoned that he not only wore a steel cap, but a corslet. Consequently, my blow, which somewhat stunned him, neither unhorsed him nor placed him what the French call *hors de combat*. Moreover, I was harassed by the others, who now attacked us furiously, some swearing strange oaths, and others crying to the saints to help them in the fight. In truth, I was more than once in danger of being cut down, and perhaps should have been, but for Mawgan Killigrew, who seemed to be in three places at once, and who fought for the very joy of it!

"Three to one, and one over!" he cried again and again. "Come on, Master Spaniards, come on!" and his laugh rang out clear as a bell.

As I have said, the light was not good, still it was not so dark but we could see what we were doing. John Trenoweth was on foot, but as I thought surrounded. How he lost his seat I do not know, but the fact did not seem to disadvantage him one whit, especially as in the midst of the struggle I saw him take a Spaniard and lift him above his head as though he were a baby, and then throw him from him with terrible force.

"Esther, my dear maid," I heard him say more than once, and speaking in the Cornish vernacular, "doan't 'ee be 'fraid, my buty, your John'll saave 'ee!"

How we should have fared but for one thing I know not, for this I will say, although the Spaniards are smaller and weaker men than we, they know how to fight. Moreover, they do not lack courage, although, God knows, they had not the same reason for struggling even to the death as we had. Especially did one of them make me wrath, for he handled his sword as if to the manner born, neither do I believe I should have got rid of him, surrounded on all sides as I was, had not John Trenoweth come to my aid when I was most sorely pressed, and with one blow felled him to the earth. Still we fought against terrible odds, and presently I saw Pablo Toledo recover himself and rush towards

me with fierce anger in his eyes. Had we been man to man I should have rejoiced because of this, even although he was partly protected by armour, for I instinctively felt him to be my enemy, and that he desired to wed the woman I had learnt to love. But we were not man to man. Another Spaniard pressed me sorely, and although he was but a small man, who, if I had him alone, would have been but of little account, nevertheless hindered me from giving my full attention to Pablo Toledo. As he came I heard a woman's voice, although, amidst the din, I was not sure whose it was, saying, "Beware, Master Hamstead," and this set my heart beating fast with joy, although it did not help me. As may be imagined, I was sore put to it, for Pablo Toledo was a fighter, and I had to meet both him and the little Spaniard I have mentioned. At that time, too, the men we had at first struck down recovered somewhat and came to their companions' aid, so that, on the whole, our work was not easy. I saw a look of confidence in Pablo Toledo's eyes, and heard him utter a cry which seemed like victory. As I have said, I know not how the affair would have ended, but for one thing, for the odds against us were great, but when the fight was at the hottest, I heard Mawgan cry out, "Inez, Inez! *Ayuda, ayuda!*" This word, "ayuda," is the one which the Spaniard used to summon help, and which Mawgan had learned while we were in prison, and no sooner had he uttered it, than, as if from the ground beneath our feet, a dozen strangely attired forms rose.

"The gipsies to the rescue!" I heard on all sides, and then I knew little of what happened, except that Pablo Toledo diverted not his attention from me.

"You I will have, Master Ruperto Hamstead!" I heard him say. "Here, soldiers, and let not the leader escape!"

And then I received a blow which stunned me. I felt myself falling from my horse, and although I struggled to keep my senses, all things became dimmer and dimmer, even as they seem when a man falls asleep.

Only one word I heard as sight and sound were departing from me, and that was the word "*Granada*," and that word was not real to me, but only as the memory of a name concerning which one has dreamed.

How long I was unconscious I know not, neither to this day do I know; but when at last I awoke there was no light save that of the stars. I felt a great pain in my head, and I seemed to hear the roar of a distant sea; but so much was I dazed that I could not for some time tell where I was, nor recall the reason for what seemed to me a strange condition.

Presently, however, my mind became clearer, and then all of a sudden I remembered all that had taken place.

Still, I did not move, but lay quietly, just as a sleepy man might lie in his bed, although he knew that the hour for rising had come.

"Did it not mean a worse death for us, he should die now," I heard someone say.

"Why should it mean death for us at all?" said another. "It is the Señor Capitan Toledo who will have to answer to the King."

"Aye, but three to ten, think of it!"

"It would have been all well but for the gipsies."

"And this is the leader; we have the man who is most important."

"Where is the señor capitan?"

"*Sabe Dios.* He is gone after them, but it is no use. The gipsies were many, and they have horses."

"This will be another reason for putting them to death. But we cannot catch them. They disappear in their holes like rabbits. But what would you?"

"Where is the señorita?"

"I know not. Gone with the heretic mother, I expect."

"Nay, nay. The señor capitan will see to that. For the old women he cares not, but for the señorita he is *enamorado.*"

All this I heard as I lay there, after which the men became silent, for there was the sound of voices and the trampling of the feet of horses.

"It is Señor Pablo Toledo coming back," I thought, and eager to know what had taken place, I sat up and looked around.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE ENTRANCE INTO THE PALACE OF PHILIP II., KING OF SPAIN

"*SANGRE de Cristo!*" I heard Pablo Toledo say savagely, as he drew up. "They have escaped in the darkness. Where I know not, for the gipsies have a thousand hiding-places. The King will demand a strict reckoning for this, my men! Think of it. Three to ten, and two of them escaped!"

"But they fought like devils," someone answered, "and the gipsies came."

"Gipsies, bah? But should not ten Spanish soldiers be equal to fifty Englishmen and gipsies. I tell you there is witchcraft in it all. They weaved their hellish spells, and turned our swords aside. Besides, how did they get swords? I tell you there is treason, treason somewhere! But where is the wounded Englishman?"

"Here, here!"

"Hah, that is well! We have the leader, and his Majesty will be somewhat solaced." He came up to me as he said this and spurned me with his foot.

"Dog of an Englishman, rise!" he said haughtily.

I rose slowly to my feet, for I felt weary beyond words, and my head gave me great pain.

"You would not call me a dog were I not wounded and had a sword in my hand," I replied.

"Pah!" he said savagely.

"Aye, a coward always insults a man he hath at advantage!" I replied.

"Coward! Call me a coward, you dog?"

"Aye, a coward," I said quietly.

"Would I had not to take you to his Majesty," he replied, "else would I kill you as you stand."

"Aye," I replied, "but you would not fight me fairly."

In this I was unjust, for Pablo Toledo was not a coward, but a brave man, although a cruel one.

"A captain may not fight his prisoners," he replied.

"I may not be long a prisoner, señor captain," I replied. "Will you meet me when I am free, even as my father met yours?"

"When you are free!" he sneered. "Aye, when you

are free I will do you the honour of sending you to hell with the sword of a gentleman. But we must away, and I do not see the señorita. Where is the señorita ?"

"Here !" said a voice which sent my blood tingling through my veins.

"Ah, señorita," said Pablo Toledo, "it grieves me much that this should have happened. But what would you ? Through treason the prisoners obtained arms, and coming on us unawares wounded some of my men before they could defend themselves. Then, as you saw, the gipsies came up, and in great numbers overpowered us, and took away the two men, and—and the others. But they will be found. We will ride quickly to Madrid, where I will arrange to send out men who will scour the whole country-side, so that even before we can get to the Escurial they will have been brought to the presence of the King. Besides, we have the most dangerous of the three, the arch-plotter of the whole business."

I could not help smiling even then at the light way in which Pablo Toledo spoke, and I was sure, although Isabella de Valencia spoke no word, she was not deceived.

"But you are a soldier's daughter," went on Toledo, "and therefore know the fortunes of a soldier's life. It grieves me much that you should see bloodshed, but, as you know, it was your own wish that you should accompany your mother and her heretic serving woman to the Escurial. It is very unfortunate ; but what would you ? The lustre of Pablo Toledo's career cannot be dimmed by a little misfortune. Besides, as I said, they will be discovered and brought back to-morrow. Let us forward, then !"

"So please your excellency," said one of the soldiers, "but there be three men too badly wounded to travel."

"Then let them lie here for the night," said Toledo lightly. "If someone does not pick them up through the night, the men whom I will send will find them in the morning. Forward, I say."

Whereupon we mounted our horses, I with very great difficulty, for I was wounded, although not badly, in more than one place. Even when I had mounted, I sat my horse with difficulty, for in addition to the pain my wounds gave me, I was so closely pinioned to my steed, that I could barely move my limbs. Moreover, I was closely guarded, so closely that even had I been unshackled and unwounded there would have been no possibility of escape.

But concerning this I did not grieve ; rather, as may be imagined, I was overjoyed at the course events had taken,

for everything had turned out as I had hoped. Indeed, all things were better than I hoped, for had not the gipsies come to our aid at a time when the battle seemed sore against us ? and had not Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth taken the two Englishwomen with them ? I wondered much whether Inez was among the gipsies when Mawgan had cried for help, or whether they were a strolling band of vagrants, who were glad of any excuse for fighting the King's soldiers. But I did not fear. Mawgan Killigrew was no fool, while John Trenoweth still had that in his possession which made the gipsies do his bidding.

During the hours we rode through the darkness I heard Isabella de Valencia speak no word, although Pablo Toledo tried often to draw her into a conversation. Again and again did he bid her not to trouble about her mother's fate, and tell her that she would be brought to the King before another sunset. What comfort he thought this might bring her I knew not, especially as the King was so bitter towards English heretics ; nevertheless, he spoke in the way I have described, although she never made answer to what he said.

" What share hath she had in all this ? " I kept asking myself as we rode along in the darkness. " Can it be that I have misjudged her, and hath she really obeyed my bidding ? " and although my heart beat joyfully at the thought, I could not bring myself to believe it. I remembered that for months she had played into the hands of the Jesuits, for months she had stood by regardless of her mother's fate, neither could she do aught to rescue her, save to ask us to write to Sir John Tremayne in order to persuade him to give his possessions to those who were the enemies of his country. And yet there were many things I could not understand, so that even although my reason told me she was my enemy, and the tool of my enemies, my love pleaded for her.

That night we stayed at Madrid, but concerning the city I can say nothing. It was dark when we entered, and although I was but little fit to travel, it was barely light when we started the next morning. Through the night I had lain in a cold, dark room, and although my wounds troubled me sorely, little attention was paid to them ; but food was brought in plenty, and of a wholesome nature, so that I was not so weak as I feared I should be.

The journey from Madrid to the Escurial was marked by no particular event. I noticed, however, that none of the guard save Pablo Toledo were the same as accompanied

us the day before. Moreover, Isabella de Valencia was not with us. As a consequence, Pablo Toledo rode along for the first part of the way in moody silence. Mile after mile we traversed without speaking a word, and when once one of the soldiers burst into a song he harshly bade him hold his peace. Did not my wounds fret me, I think I should have enjoyed the journey, for it was not long, being only about thirty miles at the most; moreover, the country here was much finer than that to be found in the region round about Toledo. The hills around were neither so treeless nor so verdureless. Clear streams of water laughed their way through the valleys, while away in the distance great mountains cleaved the very sky. The air, moreover, was clearer, and more healthgiving than that around Toledo; in truth, the whole aspect of the scene reminded me of England, which, as I believe, is the fairest country God's sun ever shone upon.

When we had travelled perhaps twenty miles, Señor Pablo Toledo drew up his horse close to mine.

"Methinks you are in pain, Señor Hamstead," he said, in a tone which I think he meant to be kind.

"My wounds fret me somewhat, and my limbs are much cramped," I replied.

"Will you give your word of honour that you will not try to escape if I have your bonds taken off?"

"Willingly," I replied. For in truth, now that Mawgan and John Trenoweth had escaped with the Englishwomen, I felt no desire to get away. Rather, I desired to see the King for purposes concerning which I have mentioned.

Whereupon he caused my bonds to be unfastened, which enabled me to ride with some degree of comfort. He also bade the soldiers leave us together, so that we might converse freely.

"I made a promise to you last night that if ever you were free I would honour you with my sword," he continued presently.

"Aye," I replied. "And I hope to avail myself of that promise."

"It shall be as you wish," he said gravely. "Not that I expect you will ever gain your freedom. It is true his Majesty pays great heed to what seems to him the intervention of the powers of Heaven, and therefore the Saints alone know how he will regard the strange happening in El Cristo de la Vega. But then he also is a Catholic, and hateth English heretics, so that I much fear you will be burned—that is, if you do not repent and promise to lend

your aid in driving that strumpet Elizabeth from the English throne. Besides, he will be angry that you aided the gipsies yesterday in letting those—those other heretics escape."

"As to that, I should think no soldier could be angry," I made answer. "And as the King is himself a soldier, he will surely forgive me for doing that which he himself would do were he a prisoner."

"If you were a prisoner in any other country methinks what you say would be sound speech," he replied, "but not in Spain, not in Spain!"

"And why not in Spain?" I asked.

"Do you ask that?" he asked as if in astonishment. "You speak as if a Spaniard were like other men. You should know, Señor Hamstead, that Spain is God's chosen land, even as the Spaniards be God's chosen people. He who resists us, then, resists God."

And this he said gravely, as though he fully believed what he said, which in truth he doubtless did, and it was this which made the Spaniard so haughty, and so impatient and angry at the least approach of resistance.

"It is because of this, you must tell me what I ask you," he went on.

I did not speak because his tone of calm assurance made me angry.

"I require you to tell me, then, by what means you and your friends obtained arms yesterday."

"I know not, señor."

"You know not. Beware that you do not lie to me."

"I do not lie," I replied. "Again I say that, were I free, you would not speak such words to me."

"The son of Don Ferdinand Toledo speaks when he will, where he will, and how he will," he replied. "But I accept your words. There is, however, another question I would ask you. Do you presume to lift your eyes to the señorita in love?"

"An Englishman does not talk lightly of love," I made answer, "therefore he would not answer such a question."

My reply angered him. I saw him bite his lower lip savagely, while his eyes gleamed with rage.

"Have you dared to hold converse with her?" he asked presently.

"May I inquire by what right you ask?" I retorted.

"By the right of conquest," he answered haughtily. "It is my purpose to honour her with my hand, therefore I take summary vengeance on those who would breathe her name save with reverence."

At this I laughed, for I saw not only anger, but jealousy in his eyes.

"When I honour a woman with my love," he went on grandiloquently, "it is enough to forbid any other man to think of her, save as a subject may think of a queen. Henceforth, she becomes sacred. Therefore, I demand that you shall tell me all that hath taken place between you."

"How can we have had converse?" I asked, suppressing the retort which came to my lips. "Have I not been closely guarded? Have I not been in prison?"

"She hath English blood in her veins," he said, seeming to speak more to himself than to me, "and her mother hath filled her mind with English thoughts. Moreover, there are many things I do not understand. But these shall be explained, and although I speak fairly to her, if I find that she hath in aught thwarted my will——"

He did not finish his speech, but glared moodily at the great mountains which lay northward.

"I have seen love in your eyes," he went on, "and that, but for the King's commands, would have meant your death. For how dare you, how *dare* you lift your eyes to the woman I have chosen! Besides, I will sift everything to the bottom, and if I find that she hath had aught to do with——"

Again he stopped short, while a great fear came into my heart. Not for myself, but for her. I remembered that I had commanded her to return our swords, and I did not see how, except through her influence, they could have come into our possession.

But I said nothing, for I could see that the man was mad with rage and jealousy, and that he would lose no chance of bringing her into his power.

Presently we saw, lying nearly at the foot of a great range of mountains, a palace, and, pointing towards it, I asked what it was.

"It is the palace of the King," he replied. "In less than three hours after noonday we shall be there. When I have delivered you up to the guards there, my duty is for the time done. But remember what I have said, señor."

I longed to ask him where the señorita was, and whether she, too, would have to appear before the King, but remembering what he had said, I held my peace. We therefore rode on for some time in silence; nevertheless, from time to time I scanned his face closely.

"Do you know my patron saint appeared to me in a dream last night?" he said after a long silence. "Aye,

but she did, and spoke to me. She revealed to me the fact that you loved the señorita, and this made me know that I had seen love in your eyes. You see this sword!"

"It is my father's sword," I said, "the sword by which he conquered your father, the sword with which he was tempted to kill him, but did not."

"The Saint Teresa spoke to me about it," he went on solemnly. "She told me that I must keep it always, for if ever it came into your possession again, you would conquer me both in love and in war. Perhaps that is why I have spoken to you in this way, señor. Perhaps, too, I have spoken harshly, for full well do I know how impossible it is for any man to look into my Isabella's eyes and not to love her. How else should I, Pablo Toledo, have lost my heart? But I have told you my will, and that is enough."

After this he spoke no other word until we drew up to the great Palace which King Philip had but lately built, and which was called the Escurial.

"Know you why it is called the Escurial?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"The meaning in our Spanish tongue of the word Escurial is an exhausted mine," he said, "and there be many who say that his Majesty had this in his mind when he so named his palace. Some have it that he drained the wealth of Spain to build it; others, that he exhausted the genius of the architects who planned it. But what then, it is a noble pile! Plain, stately, strong, even like his Majesty. If a miracle should happen, and you should return to your little island, you can tell them that you have seen one of the world's wonders, the palace of the King of Spain."

When we drew nearer, I saw that the King had caused many trees to be planted around his palace, and that many new houses had been built close to it. In truth, it struck me as one of the fairest places I had yet seen in the country. Not that it was grand and imposing like Toledo; rather, it was too new to have that atmosphere of grandeur which is associated with Toledo; nevertheless, the village looked homely and restful. When at length we entered the precincts of the palace, however, this feeling departed. For the whole pile was plain to severity. All around the central building, which was at once a church, a vault, and a palace, were long rows of stables, and lackeys' chambers, which were only separated from the palace by a great courtyard, where soldiers walked and gossiped, and this, as I thought,

was more reminiscent of what the Spaniards called a *barraca*, or a place where soldiers are trained, than a King's dwelling place.

But concerning these things I cannot speak with confidence, for directly Pablo Toledo gave his message to the guard at the gates, we passed into the church, where Pablo Toledo, having knelt at the altar and given thanks to God for bringing him safely hither, sent a message to the King. And this I found was in accordance with the King's wishes. Even in cases of great urgency, all messengers had first to kneel at the altar, ask forgiveness for their sins, and thank the saints for their protection before coming into his presence.

This done, I was presently led through long passages until I was ushered into a badly lit room, which, as I judged, was under the surface of the ground, while Pablo Toledo was told to present himself to the King without delay.

How long I waited in this room I know not, for I seemed as one in a dream. All the events which I have here set down flashed through my mind with the speed of lightning, and although I tried to understand their meaning, I could not, my brain being somewhat dazed. I think, however, that I must have remained there for some hours, for when, presently, messengers came to me, no light pierced the iron gratings which connected the apartment with the open air.

"Follow," said one of the messengers who came to me.

"Whither?" I asked.

But he spoke no word. Instead, he walked along the gloomy passages with a stately, measured step, never deigning either by word or look to notice me.

He must be leading me to another prison, I thought to myself, as presently we descended some steps and stopped at a closed door.

"Stand here," he said, "and wait his Majesty's will."

"Is the King within?" I asked aloud.

"Hush," he whispered haughtily. "How dare you speak aloud, when your words may disturb either his councils or his devotions!"

At this I concluded that he must be behind the closed door, which, naturally, caused my mind to be much perturbed. And yet I could not imagine how the King of Spain, who had built such a wondrous palace, should choose for himself rooms that were well-nigh underground, and so situated that no ray of sunlight could ever reach him, and where he could not see either the green trees or the blue sky.

But I spoke no word, and for that matter I desired not to speak. The place was as cold as a vault, while the warders looked more like statues than living men.

Presently the door opened, and I heard my own name, "Ruperto Hamstead."

One moment later and I stood in the presence of Philip of Spain, the second of his name, and regarded as the mightiest monarch in the world.

"Kneel!" whispered a voice; but for a moment I could do nothing save gaze around the room.

CHAPTER XXV

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE KING

FOR first of all the apartment was but little bigger than a peasant's kitchen, neither was there aught in it that suggested the dwelling-place of a king. Placed against one of the walls was a small writing desk, made, as I thought, of oak, but of no more value—nay, nor so much—than that which might belong to a vendor of clothes in London city. No tapestry of any sort covered the floor, neither were there pictures of any value on the walls. This, however, I noticed: there was an aperture which opened into the church, through the which came to me the sound of chanting priests. Their voices were but dim, however, and had, as I thought, a soothing effect upon a man who was much worn and tired.*

Had not my father described to me how the King looked as a young man, I should scarcely have recognised him now, so haggard and weary did he look. He sat on what seemed to me a chair that could yield him but little comfort, while before him was a kind of stool, on which he rested his right leg. His yellow hair and beard, which were closely cropped, were fast turning grey, while his large blue eyes had a somewhat weak and watery appearance. His lips were thick and sensuous, and, as I thought, twitched continuously, as though he were much wrought upon. His fingers also moved constantly. Seated in this chair, supporting what I afterwards learnt was a gouty foot, on a kind of leather seated stool, he presented by no means an imposing appearance, and I did not wonder that our gracious Queen did not incline her heart towards him.

In the room also stood three men. One I took to be an ecclesiastic, for he wore the garb of the Church. By the ecclesiastic's side stood a man of fine presence and haughty demeanour, and yet one who, as it seemed to me, lacked both strength and decision of character. The third, standing by the door, was Señor Pablo Toledo.

Although I have taken some time to describe this, it all came to me in the twinkling of an eye. For, a moment after I entered the King's presence, all that dazed feeling

* The rooms of Philip II. may still be seen in the Escurial, and closely correspond with the description given.—J. H.

which had possessed me for so long passed away, and every power of my being became strong and active.

"Kneel," someone whispered again, and then I stepped forward and knelt by his chair. And this I did, not because I acknowledged him to be my king, but because I had been taught that all kings were appointed by God, and that it was a man's duty, in whatsoever country he might be, to pay homage to the reigning monarch.

"Rise, Señor Hamstead," said the King, in the Spanish tongue, but in a voice that was neither pleasant nor musical. "I have commanded you to my presence because I would see one on whose behalf a miracle hath been wrought," he said presently. "When God speaks, kings must needs listen and wonder."

I bowed low, but said naught, for, in truth, there seemed no need to speak.

"It hath come to me," he went on, "that you are chosen to do the will of God, even as Abraham of olden time was a chosen instrument of God before he understood His will. Doubtless, moreover, this gracious interposition of the saints will soften your heart and lead you to the truth."

Still I was silent, for, although it seemed as though a miracle had been worked on behalf of my companions and myself, I could not say "Amen" to his words.

"Speak I not the truth, Father Sanchez?" continued the King, turning to the ecclesiastic by his side.

"It is spoken as only your Majesty can speak," said the priest, "spoken even as Solomon the wise spoke in Jerusalem. Therefore, let the youth forswear his errors, and yield allegiance without delay."

"Aye, that is my will concerning you, Señor Hamstead," said the King, as though he had only need to speak in order to be obeyed.

"As to that, sire," I replied, "I have not yet been instructed as to what errors I must forswear."

"Ah, yes, I remember. You have been fed on error, and taught to despise the commandments of God. But that shall be remedied right quickly. One on whose behalf the saints have worked a miracle must be well taught. Well do I remember the figure of our Lord in El Cristo de la Vega, and never did I think the arm would be again raised. Therefore, Father Sanchez himself shall be both your instructor and confessor. This favour I grant you, seeing that such a wondrous thing hath been done for you. Moreover, as a further mark of my favour, I will order that special prayers shall be said for your speedy conversion."

"Kneel again, and give thanks to his Majesty," said

the priest, and this I did—not that I believed aught in what he said, but because it is a man's duty to render thanks when a king grants what he believes to be a favour.

"And now we will turn to other matters," said the King. "For a long time I have waited for a special sign from heaven, and thrice have the saints appeared to me in a dream, telling me that such a sign would be given. For this reason my anger will not fall so heavily upon Señor Pablo Toledo for allowing your companions to escape. For, according to my dreams, not three, but one, was to do that which I desired. For why should you out of the three have been brought thither but that you are the instrument chosen to do my will?"

At this I could not help wondering much, for at that time I did not know how fervently the King believed in dreams, and omens, and signs of all sorts. I learnt afterwards, however, that he constantly prayed concerning these things, and that, even against the judgment of his confessor and statesmen, he was guided by them. I afterwards learnt, moreover, that it was because of a vision which he believed came from heaven that he selected the Duke of Medina Sidonia as the commander of the great Armada which was to conquer England. For not only had he dreamed that the Duke of Medina would lead his forces to a complete victory, but a pious hermit had also told him that this same man would cause Spain to be victorious. The Princess of the Annunciato, Maria de la Visitacion, had also made known to him that she had seen two angels smiting Drake and his unbelieving comrades, while the Duke was to have glory both in this world and in the next.

It was owing to this trait in his character, therefore, that I had been brought before him, and through this also that he received me with such special kindness. I moreover learned that in one of his dreams it was told him that a converted heretic should be one of the instruments which God had given him to accomplish his desires, and he had fastened upon me as the fulfilment of his dreams.

"I therefore regard your conversion as accomplished," he went on. "For not only is it my will, but the saints have spoken, and a miracle hath been wrought. And now I wish you to tell me many things with regard to England. It is true I have had numerous messages, but they have come from my own servants, and thus they have seen matters through the eyes of desire. But you have seen them through the eyes of a heretic. You have, up to now, looked upon me as the enemy of your country."

After this he asked me many questions concerning the strength and feeling of the Catholics in England, which I answered as truthfully as I was able.

"Know they the number of ships and the number of men I have commanded to go?" he asked.

"I think not, sire," I replied.

Then he told me of the vast array of ships which were being prepared, and of the mighty host of men who were to sail in them, and as he spoke my heart sank within me; for how, I asked myself, could we meet such a foe? Moreover, my heart was more than ever filled with longing to fly back and tell her Majesty of that which was being done.

"Think you that the English can resist such a power?" he asked presently.

"Our vessels are few and small compared with those of which you speak," I made answer. "But then every man of us hath been told to die fighting. The great Admiral Drake hath no master on the seas, while the men that he, and Sir Richard Grenville, and Raleigh, and others have gathered around them do not know what it is to be beaten."

"But know they not that I fight the battles of the Lord?" I shook my head.

"But they will know, and that right soon. Think you that I would undertake this mission were I not called of God? Some there be who say that I would conquer England for political purposes, and for political purposes only; but they do not know—they do not know. I do this for the glory of God. The Almighty hath raised me up that I may lead the children of Spain, the chosen people of God, to go to England and to destroy the Amalekites, and the Jebusites, those children of Belial who have destroyed God's altars and lifted the puny arm of rebellion against His Church. He hath raised me up, I say, to conquer them, and, if they will not be converted, to destroy them. Understand they this?"

"I think not," I replied.

"Aye, but they should know it. The Holy Father hath again and again made known his will to this stubborn and stiff-necked people, but they will not hearken, they will not consider, and now the time of the coming of the Lord is near. You believe this, young man, do you not?"

But I did not reply, whereupon he started up from his seat, and limped around the room, and continued almost passionately:

"They trust in the arm of flesh, but that arm will not deliver them. The great Armada I have prepared, invincible though it is, I would not trust in, save for the

visions I have received, the messages which have been delivered, and the prayers which have been offered. Tut! What can they do? They oppose the Moses, the Joshua of God, they defy His chosen people. Think you, think you!"—and he seemed carried away with his passion—"can the Lord turn a deaf ear to us, when we do His Will? For more than a year, from all parts of Catholic Europe, the prayers of the faithful have ascended, that God will arise and make His power known. Every day masses are being said on more than fifty thousand altars. Every night untold thousands of pious monks are bruising their knees on chapel pavements, while an innumerable army of holy women who have forsaken the world, plead with God to give victory to our arms. From all parts of the world the faithful come. From Italy, from France, from Germany, from Ireland—aye, even from England itself they come—all ready and waiting to destroy that child of sin, that she-wolf, who hath usurped the throne of the chosen of God. Will God fail us? Nay, by vision, by dream, by prophecy, and by the messages of holy men from the wide world over, I am told of victory!"

"But the Duke Sidonia hath not fared well at the hands of Drake in the past," I could not help saying, for I remembered what had happened to him at Cadiz.

"Aye, and were not the children of Israel smitten at Ai? When there was an Achan in the camp, did the work of the Lord prosper? But what then? The evil was purged away, and God's people were triumphant. Aye, deny me not, Sidonia," and he turned to the man who stood near Father Sanchez and of whom I have spoken; "thou knowest that the Lord hath chosen thee! Even thy seeming failures I regard as harbingers of thy victory, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Think of it, think of it," and now I am sure he forgot that I was there—aye, forgot everything, save the vision of his hopes. "One hundred and thirty great ships, the like of which was never seen in English waters. Great galleons from a thousand to thirteen hundred tons bearing power, galleasses rowed by innumerable slaves and bearing many guns. Nine thousand seamen have I—aye, more than nine thousand—who have served in every part of the world. Seventeen thousand picked soldiers also will I send—aye, and twice seventeen thousand, should the Lord need them. These the Prince of Parma shall command, and shall help you, Sidonia, to march to victory. Nobles have I from every land, youths of daring and dash who are ready to fight with the devil himself in the cause of Spain, and the Holy

Church. Can the children of evil and unbelief meet us? Can they withstand us?

"Nay, in a year from now, Señor Hamstead, the altars of the Church shall be restored, the sacred images and relics returned to the places from which they have been taken, from every church shall the true ministers of God sing Masses, and incense shall arise everywhere. As for the unbelievers—ah, well, either they shall conform or they shall die. Die! I say. Even as we have burnt out heresy in Spain so will we burn it out in England. The faith of every man, woman, and child shall be inquired into, and they who will not believe!—ah, well, every vessel shall be laden with the instruments we have found efficacious elsewhere—then shall belief reign everywhere, and my name shall be handed down to all generations as he, the chosen servant of God, who destroyed the enemies of His Church!"

As he spoke his eyes lost their weak and watery appearance, his thick, sensuous lips were parted and eager, and his somewhat sullen and heavy appearance was lightened up with enthusiasm.

"And thou, Señor Ruperto Hamstead, shalt have a share in this," he continued. "The saints have made known their will, heretic as thou hast been. Enemy of my people as thou hast been, thou shalt be one of the instruments in this great consummation. I know not how, I may never know how. But what of that? It is the will of Heaven, else why hath Heaven spoken? Therefore, as I said, thou shalt stay near me. While I am in this palace thou also shalt reside here. Señor Sanchez shall instruct thee, and prayers for thy conversion shall be offered at once. Until that time when thou shalt renounce all thy errors, thou must not leave the palace gates; nevertheless, thou shalt be at liberty within them. And more, knowing as I do the power of women to persuade, thou shalt meet with the women of my Court. And now I would be alone. Señor Capitan Toledo, spare no endeavours to bring the two heretic English women hither that I may see them. The widow of Don Fernandio Basilio de Valencia must not die a heretic, while the soul of her waiting woman must also be saved. As for the two Englishmen, let them be taken and dealt with as English heretics should be dealt with."

Then he dismissed us, and thus I, with Pablo Toledo, left the King's presence.

"I grieve much," said Pablo to me when we got away from the King.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because I may not fight you," he replied. "But

wait; the King's hand may soon be taken from you, and then I may honour you with my sword."

"That time cannot be too soon for me," I said.

"Until that time I would give you warning," he said, and I noticed that his voice was hoarse with passion. "See that you speak not to the woman to whom I have given my love. To the other women thou mayst speak, even as the King hath said; but to her, it is my will that you be silent."

At this I laughed, for he spoke as though he himself might be King of Spain. Moreover, I rejoiced, because his words told me that she was to be at the Escurial, and I should have opportunity of again feasting my eyes upon her, much as I doubted the wisdom of allowing the thought of her to come into my mind.

"You laugh, Señor Hamstead," he said, fiercely. "You laugh, because for the moment the King hath smiled on you, and because he hath rebuked me for my misfortunes. But remember this: the wills of kings change, and it would take but little to turn him against you, and then I can work my will on you. But, ah! Why should I fear? She hates you as she hates all English heretics, and she, the child of the Don of Valencia, cannot but love the son of Ferdinand Toledo. Nevertheless, I tell you to beware, Señor Hamstead."

That night I slept warm and soundly in an apartment which had been allotted to me, for not only was the place clean and wholesome, but a doctor had dressed my wounds, and so skilful was he that from that day they caused me no trouble whatsoever.

When I awoke next morning, moreover, I saw that the room was pleasantly situated. Looking out of the window, I could see a vast sweep of country, even to the hills which surround Madrid. Although the autumn was much advanced, moreover, the sun shone warm and clear, while in the King's garden, which I could see, were many gaily-coloured flowers. This I noted while I thought much of my situation. For truly I had many things to contemplate. I remembered that Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth were being eagerly searched for, while the King had commanded that the two English women should be brought before him without delay. And thus while I had great hopes that by the aid of the gipsies they might escape the King's anger, I feared greatly for them. My own position, moreover, was one to fill me with grave apprehension. I reflected that Señor Sanchez was told to instruct me in the belief of the Spaniards, while the King expected my speedy conversion. I wondered much how

I could match my wits with those of the priest; how, in short, I could maintain my integrity, and yet not anger the King.

Then, too, my mind was filled with many forebodings concerning Isabella de Valencia, for, struggle as I would, I loved her with a passionate, unreasoning love. Believing her cruel and undutiful to her mother, having much assurance that she was but the spy and the tool of the Jesuits, I still loved her. It was true I was angry with her, and reflected on the many sayings with which I should taunt her when we met, nevertheless, I felt as though I would willingly fall at her feet and be her slave.

Added to all this, I longed to go back with all speed to England, to tell her Gracious Majesty what I had discovered concerning the King's preparations, and I bethought me of plans how I might escape, and that right soon, and be the messenger of such important news. But these plans came to naught, as will presently be seen.

That morning brave apparel was brought to me, as well as good food, and before the day was over I discovered that the King's will concerning me was made known, for while I was not allowed outside the palace domains, and while I was forbidden to carry arms, I was yet treated with much courtesy; neither had I any matter of which I could in aught complain. That day, moreover, Señor Sanchez found no time to instruct me in things religious; so that I was able to wander around the Escurial and view it from all sides, which I did, much to my wonder and admiration.

During that day I saw naught of the Señorita de Valencia, neither did she appear to me on the next, so that I began to wonder much how she fared. I feared lest Pablo Toledo might have used means to keep her from coming to the palace, or that she had in some way fallen under the King's displeasure. And this filled my mind all the more because never since the night of my arrival had I seen Pablo Toledo, which led me, after much thought, to ask one of the guards whether he was still in the palace.

"He hath gone to Madrid, excellency," said the soldier.

"On any special mission?" I asked.

"That I know not," he replied; "but I have been told he hath gone on the King's command."

And this was all that he could tell me; but it made my heart much lighter, and, as I found my way to the gardens, I felt like singing aloud. I had gone but a few steps among the trees, however, when all thought of song left me, for in the near distance, talking with two other Spanish dames, I saw Isabella de Valencia, who, as she heard my footsteps, lifted her eyes to mine.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE LOVE THAT INSPIRED ANGER

NOW, strange as it may seem, no sooner did I see her than my love made me desire to be harsh and cruel towards her. My heart, even while it became even as a flame of fire, so full was I of love for her, was also full of bitterness and wrath. Angry words rose to my lips and biting taunts filled my mind. How to explain this I know not, for never had I seen her look so fair and so gentle. Moreover, as she stood by the Spanish dames, she revealed more clearly than ever before the fact of her English blood. Her black hair and eyes did not destroy the suggestion that her features were not altogether Spanish. Her clear and rosy skin, moreover, was not born of Spain, but of the green fields and sweet flowers of my native land. In truth, as she stood talking with them, she seemed almost alien to them. She stood at least four inches taller than they, her movements were far more graceful, while there was that about her finely moulded form which made me think of my dear mother.

Only for a moment did she look at me, for, once having caught sight of me, she turned again to her companions. This caused me to keep away from them, but, although I wandered into another part of the garden, it was not long before I found myself near them again.

I think the Spanish maidens knew who I was, and that they had heard of the King's will concerning me, for no sooner did they see me draw near a second time than they began to speak aloud concerning England, and of the people who lived there.

"What will become of the English lords?" said one. "Aye, I will tell you. They will be brought over to Spain as servants—that is, those of them who will give up their errors and embrace the Church. But what then? Better be a servant in Spain than a lord in England," and then they looked towards me and laughed.

I spoke no word, although they angered me much, especially as I saw they intended me to understand that they scorned my country.

"They will not be fit for house servants," said another, "for a house servant needs intelligence, neither can they

fight. Therefore, they will have to work with *los mulos* in the fields. As for the women, ah ! what will become of the women ! "

" What do our *caballeros* with the heathen women in Mexico ? "

" Oh, they make them slaves ! "

" Then we will have them brought to Spain as slaves," and they laughed again.

They were young women, and fair to look upon ; moreover, being for the moment free from restraint, I judged that they were glad of an opportunity to get a little amusement. This emboldened me to draw still nearer to them ; but I do not think I should have spoken had not Isabella de Valencia, by a slight movement of the head, beckoned me to her side.

" Here is an English *caballero*," she said to the Spanish maidens as I came up ; " had you not better question him ? "

At this they seemed for a moment confused ; but one bolder than the other made a mock courtesy. " What do you eat in England, señor ? " she asked.

" Not snails," I replied.

" No ? " she said, mockingly.

" Neither snails nor frogs," I went on. " You see, the English are bred to dainty fare."

" And what do you drink ? "

" That which makes us strong," I made answer. " So strong that, not many days ago, three English prisoners laughed at ten Spanish soldiers. They not only escaped themselves, but took away two women. Three of the Spanish soldiers also were placed *hors de combat*, but, what would you ? Snails, frogs, and vinegar be but poor fare. So I do not blame the Spaniards for being soft of heart and weak of limb."

Even as I spoke I expected that they would have turned the laugh on me by telling me that, while others escaped, I myself had been taken prisoner. But the Spanish maidens be not quick-witted like those of England, and all they did was to look at me angrily.

" As for our English maidens," I went on, " they be so fair, and comely—moreover, they be so witty and gay—that, should any Spaniard have the good luck to land on our shores, he will eat his heart out for their love. I fear, too, he will die of love, for an English maid scorns all but brave men."

" It is well known that the English be boasters," said one of them angrily.

"Scarcely," I replied. "Not having lived in Spain, they have never learnt the way. You see, the Spaniards were beaten so easily and so quickly at Cadiz some months ago that our men had no time to learn Spanish manners."

I should not have said these things had not my heart been filled with rage, for not only did the mere sight of Isabella de Valencia arouse me to anger, but she had laughed at her companions' merriment. As I saw their black looks, moreover, I somewhat feared the result, for I knew the Spaniard's pride, and that he would never forgive anyone who doubted his courage. However, I had no time to try and make peace, for I heard the sound of other voices, which caused them to move away, but not before Isabella de Valencia had said, in a low tone in English, "The great sycamore tree."

Then they all went away together, leaving me but ill pleased with myself, for although I had not failed to return with interest the words the Spanish maidens had spoken, I had not returned them with skill. In truth, my fighting was that with the broadsword, and not with the rapier.

I bore in mind the words the Señorita de Valencia had spoken, however, and looked eagerly around for the great sycamore tree, the which I had no trouble in finding, for it stood at least ten feet higher than any other tree in the King's gardens. Here I waited some time, but no one came; and this angered me much, for I felt that I was befooled, so I stalked away in high dudgeon, but had not gone far before I saw a soldier who had evidently been watching me.

He saluted me, however, when he saw that I had noted him, but in no further way did he pay heed to my presence. I accordingly went back to the palace courtyard again, where I was met by Father Sanchez, who took the opportunity of instructing me in his religion. I did not understand much that he said, and this was doubtless because my thoughts were rather devoted to what the señorita had said than to any niceties of theology. So dull was I, indeed, that the father presently got tired of talking with me, whereupon I again made my way to the sycamore tree, where I looked eagerly around me. All around grew huge evergreens, between which I soon discovered that a path threaded its way, and ere long I came to a spot so completely sheltered that a man might be ten yards away, and yet not have had the ghost of an idea that I was near.

The sun was now sinking behind the mountains that lay westward, while a great quietness fell upon the scene. Away at the great palace was a slight hum of voices, but all around me was silence.

"She would speak with me here," I thought, and although I knew not how she could reach me without observation, I had strong hopes that she would come. More than once did I creep back to the sycamore tree, and gaze carefully around in order that I might discover whether I was watched; but, on seeing no one, I again crept back to the little arbour, where I was completely hidden. By-and-by I grew utterly forgetful of my surroundings, for my thoughts flew back to the day when John Trenoweth came to me at Hamstead Manor, and of the time when my mother bade me God-speed, and told me to fight in Christ's name and in Christ's strength. After that I pondered long on the experiences through which I had passed since that day, and presently set to wondering how Mawgan Killigrew fared, and whether he and John Trenoweth had taken the two Englishwomen to a place of safety. I know, too, that I had just completed a plan whereby I could escape from the Escurial, taking Isabella de Valencia with me, when I heard a slight noise near me, and, on starting up and opening my eyes, I saw her of whom I had been thinking standing before me. Even then the anger which she had caused to come into my heart again arose within me.

"I have obeyed your behest, señorita," I said. "I have come to the great sycamore tree."

"Have you heard aught of your companions—and the others?" she asked.

"No," I replied, "but I do not fear."

"You do not know, then, that Father Parsons hath arrived at the palace?"

"No."

"But he hath; also Señor Toledo."

"Pablo Toledo?"

"No, the señor, his father—and the young priest with whom you spoke in the chapel the night before you left Toledo. Many others have also come."

I thought she spoke like one in fear, for she gazed around like one who apprehended danger.

"And the Señor Capitan Pablo, when returns he?" I asked.

"Two days hence," she replied.

"Then should the señorita be happy," I said. "Her mother, thanks to three heretic prisoners, is now out of the Inquisitors' power, so she will be free to receive the court of the gallant capitan, as well as to receive the consolations of her father confessor."

This I said bitterly, not able to repress the rage in my heart.

"And you, señor, what will you do?" she asked.

"That can be of no interest to the señorita," I replied.

"Have you received instructions from Father Sanchez?" she asked. "Doth your heart lean towards the truth?"

"Doth the man who hath lived in his father's house incline to reside in a peasant's hovel?" I asked.

She looked up at me, her eyes ablaze, and then I realised how she hated heretics.

"Aye, be angry," I said, "for surely it is justified. Your mother hath been snatched from the Inquisitors, and, by the mercy of God, I believe they will never have her in their power again. This must be sore grief to you."

"Oh, how I hate you!" she cried, repeating the words she had used in the little sacristy some nights before.

"Aye, you hate me," I replied, "for I bade you help me to deliver your mother from her tormentors. I bade you cause our swords to be restored, and, though you ill liked it, you had to do it. Aye, you had to obey me, little as it pleased you," and I laughed cruelly.

"Oh, you will suffer for this," she made answer. "Remember, Father Parsons is not dead, and the man whom your father conquered years ago never forgives. Never! never! Even now they are with the King, and although the King smiles one day, he is angry the next."

"And what then, mistress? What if the King is angry?"

"Only this. You would not be the first English heretic, nor the second, whom the King hath commanded to be tortured and burnt. Place not too much confidence in his faith in dreams and visions. Moreover, he is quick to change his mind."

"Let him change his mind," I replied. "When it suits me, I can escape from this place as easily as a bird can fly out of an open cage."

This I said with a boastfulness that I little felt, for truly my heart was heavy, in spite of my pretended confidence.

"You escape!" she replied scornfully. "You escape! You have neither the wit nor the courage. Now that Master Mawgan Killigrew is not with you, you be as helpless as a child."

"Helpless as a child, am I?" I cried, and then, like a fool, I blurted out the plan of which I had been thinking when she came to me, although I did not tell her that I had also planned for her to go with me.

"*Gracias!*" she said mockingly, when I had spoken,

" for now I can go to Señor Toledo and tell him what you have said. Now I can even go to the King, and tell him that, instead of yielding to the truth, you be scheming to go back to England and tell what you know of his plans."

" But you will not, Mistress Isabella," I said.

" No ; and why not, wise sir ? "

" Because you dare not, because it is not the will of God that you should," and even as was the case when we were together in the sacristy, I lost control of myself again, and went on wildly. In truth, I spoke more like a madman than one who had in times past boasted of being able to keep a cool head in times of much excitement.

" You dare not," I said, " because, although you hate me now, the time will come when you will love me, even as I love you. Because of that, you dare not disobey my will now. Because of that, you dare do naught that may place me in danger. Oh ! yes, I know that you think I express my love strangely, as indeed I do, for I be mad with myself for caring aught for you. But what of that ? I do love you, angry as I am for doing so, I do love you, and shall love you till I die. Because of that, I will break Pablo Toledo as a man may break a rotten stick. Because of that, your heart shall grow warmer and warmer towards me. Aye, and as God lives, you shall be my wife, even although I know I shall despise both you and myself when I lead you to the altar ! "

" The Señorita Medina spoke wisely when she said that the English were boasters," she made answer, " and that they say what they can never accomplish. Know you not that in a week from to-day I shall be the wife of Pablo Toledo. That Señor Toledo hath made known this wish to the King, and that the King hath made known his will to me ? "

" This shall not be ! " I cried.

" It must be, it must be ! " she said feverishly.

" No," I answered weakly. " What about your vow to go into religion ? "

" The King hath willed otherwise," she answered. " Now, what can you do, Master Boaster ? "

For a minute I neither spoke nor moved.

" This," I said presently. " I will defy the King's will, and the counsels of Father Parsons, while the plans of the wily fox whom my father conquered long ago will come to naught."

" Oh, you fool, you fool, how I hate you ! " she said, looking into my face.

" And why a fool, mistress ? "

" Because you will not open your eyes : because a child of five years old could teach you wisdom."

" Nevertheless, you will refuse to wed Pablo Toledo," I said, " and when I tell you, you will be ready to escape with me, and ride with me to find your mother. One thing more you will do. You will obtain my father's sword which is now in the possession of Señor Pablo Toledo, and you will return it to me."

This I said not because I believed a word in it, but because the words seemed dragged from me against my will, and because I felt a savage delight in saying words to her which I felt sure angered her more and more. But she laughed in my face like one in great good humour, yet not without scorn.

" You are beginning to love me," I continued presently.

" Beginning to love you ! " she cried. " I could love Judas Iscariot sooner ! What, love a heretic Englishman ; love a heavy-witted country clown ! Love a callow ploughboy who struts about as a *caballero !* I would be angry with you if one could be angry with a heretic who will soon be committed to the flames."

" Then why did you ask me to come here ? " I asked.

" Because I thought you might have had news about my mother. Heretic as she is, hard-hearted to the truth as she is, English as she is, she is still my mother. I know I ought to have driven her out of my heart, even as I have been commanded to hate her, and I know I commit sin by not doing so ; but the Holy Mother may forgive me."

" Who commanded you to hate her ? "

" Our Lord commanded me," she cried. " Did He not say, ' He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me ' ? "

At this I felt more angry than ever at caring aught for her, yet could I not help myself. Even as she spoke the words which should make me despise her, I longed to take her to my heart and heap caresses upon her.

" Aye," I said scornfully, " yours is a noble creed, and what you call your Church hath instilled its poison into your heart with due effect. Nevertheless, mistress, it will be as I say. You cannot escape me, for I am your master ! "

" Master ! " and again she laughed.

" Aye, master ! You have obeyed me once, and you will obey me again. And now you may go back to your friends, seeing I have told you what you desired to know ; but bear in mind all I have said. You will be in readiness to escape with me when I give you the signal, and you will find means to restore to me my father's sword. *Adios,*

Señorita Doña Isabella de Valencia," and I made a mocking obeisance.

"Oh, you *tonto!*" she cried passionately and contemptuously, "how I despise you, how I hate you! Had you not desired to be kind to my mother, I would even now——"

"But you will do nothing to harm me," I interrupted, "nothing, and you will obey me, mistress; remember that —you will obey me; for although I despise you, I love you. See!"—and I looked straight into her eyes—"I love you, love you!"

With that I walked away and left her alone, my heart filled with anger, not only with her, but with myself for having spoken so foolishly, and for having used words that would drive her from me rather than win her to my side.

That same night Father Sanchez came to me again, in order to teach me what he called the truths of the Holy Church, and to point out the errors of the Reformed faith. This time I listened with much attention, and moreover asked him many questions. In truth, so much did I please him by the great heed which I gave to his words, that he spoke to me with much kindness and cheerfulness.

"You will soon see the truth, my son," he said, "and in this you will be wise. His Majesty is anxious that you be converted with all speed, so delay not to give up your errors and conform."

"What you say hath great interest to me, padre," I said, "but I crave for time. We English be a stubborn race, and yield not until the last doubt is removed. Nevertheless, I crave to thank the King for having given me such a wise instructor. One who is at the same time strong and gentle, wise yet loving."

"Aye, time you shall have, my son," he answered, much pleased at my words; "nevertheless, delay not to conform. The King hath great plans concerning you, so make good haste to renounce your errors. In this you will not only please his Majesty, but find great grace in the eyes of Heaven."

In spite of his kind words, however, I was during the next three days closely watched, so closely that I could not put my foot outside the palace yard, neither did any man speak a comforting word to me. This made me fear that a storm was brewing, and when presently I was taken from the bright and airy room which had been given me, and placed in what might be called a dungeon, I felt sure that Isabella de Valencia had not only taken upon herself to laugh at my commands, but that she had made known to

those in authority my plans for escaping from the King's palace.

Nevertheless, I did not give up hope, for not only was I provided with wholesome food and drink, but Father Sanchez still came daily to give me instruction in his faith.

On the second day of my change of abode Father Sanchez wore a dark look, concerning which I questioned him closely.

"I may tell you nothing save this," he replied. "You be suspected of worse things than being a heretic, so conform quickly, my son, conform quickly. I tell you this: when two devils abide in a place five days we have all need to say our prayers often."

"Two devils?" I queried.

"Aye, and one wears a priest's garb. Therefore, when you be openly questioned to-morrow, renounce your errors bravely, else the Holy Father himself may not save you."

CHAPTER XXVII

HOW WE JOURNEYED TO SEVILLE

CONCERNING this, as may be well imagined, I thought long and much, but to one conclusion only could I come. I believed that Father Parsons had questioned Isabella de Valencia, and that she had made known to him what I had told her; perhaps, too, she had confessed to him that she had used means whereby we were armed on the day we travelled from Toledo to Madrid. This led me to fear not for myself, so much as for her, for I imagined that this would place her in the power of Pablo Toledo and his father, and cause her to be obedient to their wills, even although her heart revolted against them. For I could not help believing that Father Parsons and Señor Ferdinand Toledo were the men to whom Father Sanchez applied such an ill-omened title. As far as I could make out they had been in the palace five days, and although I had not spoken to them nor seen them I felt sure they would both seek to do me harm.

I wondered much as to what Father Sanchez meant by saying that I should be openly questioned the next day, and I could not help thinking I should have to appear before some tribunal. And in this I found I had conjectured rightly, for the next morning a warder came to me after I had partaken of food and bade me to follow him to the King's throne-room. When I entered this compartment I realised that something of great importance was afoot, for not only was Father Parsons there, together with Señor Toledo and some nobles, but the King was also there looking, as I thought, stern and angry. I had barely time to note this when my heart gave a great leap, for standing close to Señor Toledo was Mistress Isabella de Valencia, in whose eyes was a look I could not understand. Not far from her was Pablo Toledo, who, as I thought, gazed towards me with a look of savage triumph, while in another part of the room was the young priest who had been with me in the little chapel that night before we left Toledo. I do not know why, but until I saw him I felt calm and brave, but when his eyes met mine, my heart became cold and heavy. For never had I seen such a look upon a man's face. His was as pale as that of a corpse, while every

feature told me that he was held fast by a great terror. Had he been told at that moment that he was to be condemned to eternal torment he could not have been filled with a greater terror. His eyeballs seemed starting from their sockets, his bloodless lips kept twitching as though he had lost control over them, while his thin, fleshless hands kept clasping and unclasping themselves. He breathed with difficulty, too ; even from where I stood I could hear him gasping like a man in the last throes of death.

I saw, moreover, that Father Parsons noted this, even as I did, and I watched a smile of cruel triumph which crept over his face.

"What doth all this portend ?" I asked myself. "Why this look on Pablo Toledo's face ? Why is that young priest so terrified, and why should Isabella de Valencia be here ?" and I waited, wondering what charges would be made, and against whom they would come.

Presently Father Parsons arose, and gazed around upon us calmly. For a moment he spoke not, and so much of the appearance of a death's head had he, that, but for the gleaming of his eyes, he would have looked like a dead man. As I think I have before said, his skin was so like parchment that one would not have been surprised to hear it crackle when he opened his mouth to speak.

He only uttered one word, and then started as though a scorpion had stung him, for at that moment there was a noise at one of the doors, and a messenger rushed in with hot haste.

"For the King!" he cried, almost breathlessly, coming up to his Majesty, and kneeling before him. At the same moment he placed a packet in Philip's hand, and then moved two steps backward.

The King broke the packet hastily and read.

"When left you Seville ?" he asked.

"But forty-eight hours ago," the messenger replied. "Neither rest nor sleep have I known. Day and night have I travelled, and six horses have I ridden."

"My lords and holy fathers," said Philip, "I must go to Seville with all speed. Not a moment must be lost in making preparations, and in a few hours we must be on horseback. But this matter shall be sifted to the very bottom, and the truth made known. Therefore, let those who are accused of the things laid to their charge be brought also to Seville, and when I have arrived there, and have attended to the matters which are here laid before me I will see that justice is done."

This said, he rose to his feet, and prepared to leave the

apartment. But although the message seemed of great importance he moved not quickly, neither, indeed, had he spoken quickly. On the night I had been brought before him, and he had talked of what had taken place in the Church of El Cristo de la Vega, and of the Great Armada that he had prepared to send, his eyes had gleamed with passion, and he spoke like a man much moved, but now he seemed almost indifferent, and even yawned as he limped towards the door. I afterwards learned that he boasted of never being excited save concerning religious matters, believing himself too great a king to show either eagerness or haste.

When he had left the room a great silence fell upon the assembly, broken only by a stifled cry from the young priest of whom I have spoken.

"Thanks, Holy Mother!" I heard him repeat again and again under his breath, as though a great burden had been lifted from his heart.

After this I was conducted back to my prison again, but I did not stay long, for before the sun began to sink behind the mountains I, with many others, began our journey southward.

Of this journey it is not necessary that I should say much, for but few things happened during the time we travelled to Seville which are of importance in this history. Of the King's cavalcade I saw nothing, neither do I know how he fared on his journey, for we travelled not with him. Not that I was treated as a prisoner during the journey. Rather much kindness was shown me by Father Sanchez, who from time to time continued to instruct me concerning the things in which I was expected to believe. Still, I was closely watched, and, even had I wished, no opportunity was given me of escape.

In spite of the fact that Pablo Toledo had fared so badly when we were placed in his charge, he was commissioned to command the expedition, but this time a much larger number of soldiers were placed under him. This was perhaps owing to the fact that we had to go through a very wild and lawless country, where outlaws and robbers abounded. Moreover, a large number of Spanish dames accompanied us, among whom was the Señorita de Valencia. During the greater part of the journey I rode much alone, neither did any man speak to me, save Padre Sanchez and the young priest of whom I have so often spoken, and who, as I discovered, was called Iago Alicante. This young man regarded me with peculiar interest. Often I caught him looking at me with, as it seemed to me, terror

in his eyes, and yet when I asked him if he had aught to say to me, he would shake his head mournfully.

When we had passed through Ciudad Real, however, he became more communicative, and seemed desirous of my confidence.

"Know you of what you will be accused when you are brought before the King in the Alcazar at Seville?" he asked.

"No," I replied; "I know nothing."

"Hath not Padre Sanchez given you any idea?"

"No, none at all. Know you, Señor Alicante?"

"Yes, I know! Holy Mother, I know."

"Tell me, then, so that I may know how to defend myself."

"Tell you! tell you! Shall a man sign his own death warrant! But, Señor Englishman, would you save many lives? Would you save my life and the lives of others?"

"If I can, and if I ought," I made answer.

"You can, and you ought," he replied. "Oh, *Santa Dios*, how can I ask him!"

"Ask me what, Father Alicante?"

"Call me not Father, nay, nay, call me not that! Call me Señor Alicante, call me Iago, and I will call you Ruperto. Let us speak as man to man."

"Very well, Señor Iago, what can I do to save your life and the lives of others."

"Speak not loudly. But doth your heart yield to the truth? Will you conform to the faith?"

"I need more instruction," I said, warily. "My mind is not yet clear on many matters."

"Conform! Conform! oh, conform, Señor Ruperto. It is not for you nor me to understand. We cannot, we cannot. Even to me there are things which be far from plain Concerning them I have thought and prayed, only to be plunged in deeper darkness. Why should I need proof that San Pedro was Bishop of Rome? Why should I, I ask? What if St. Paul was in Rome many years, and yet never once in his epistles mentioned the fact? What if there is no proof that San Pedro was ever in Rome at all? What if St. Paul was himself ordained by a layman? What if in the early Churches they knew nothing about saints as we understand it, and what if they elected their own overseers and deacons without regarding them as having priestly powers? What if there have been rival Popes reigning at the same time, each ordaining prelates, so that if only one could be the true Pope thousands of ordinations must have been false? What if many of the Popes were vile men?

What have I or you to do with it? I have thought it all out. It is for me, for you, to obey. That is all, that is all! Obey, Señor Ruperto!"

He spoke to himself rather than to me, and seemed, as it appeared to me, to be just thinking aloud.

"That is the first thing; conform, señor, conform!"

"And the other thing?"

"The other thing! Oh, Holy Mother, help me! It is this, Brother Ruperto. Persuade the señorita to wed Pablo Toledo."

"Why?"

"I cannot tell you. I cannot, cannot! But you must. If you will do this, and if you succeed, then—God help me, but my life and yours will be saved—aye, and hers, too, hers, too!"

"Hers! What do you mean?"

"Did you not know? Her life hangs on this!"

"On what?"

"On her marriage with Pablo Toledo. Oh, the chain hath been forged link by link. Ah, you do not know the Señor Ferdinand Toledo, Pablo's father. You do not know that wily English Jesuit, Father Parsons. They have eyes that see everywhere, and they have been watching, watching, planning, planning! And it is all complete. And now your life, my life, aye, her life, all hang on a thread. You can do much, Brother Ruperto, much, much! First conform, and promise to obey!"

"Obey whom?"

"Father Parsons and Señor Ferdinand Toledo. Then persuade the señorita."

"Then she is not willing to wed Pablo Toledo?" I said, my heart beating fast with a great joy.

"Willing! The saints be praised, no. But it must be! Holy Mother, I see no other way. And after all, why should I trouble? I am a priest of the Church, and should think only of the Church's will and the Church's glory. Oh, if only—only—but what of that? What if I was once a soldier and came of a noble family? What though my father, Don Carlos Alicante, is among the greatest nobles in Valencia? I have followed my own course and taken my vows. But you will do these two things, Brother Ruperto, you will do them?"

At this I held my tongue, for my mind was so filled with conflicting thoughts, that I dared not speak.

"Do you refuse?" he asked eagerly. "Will you not promise?"

"No, I'll not promise!"

"Ah!" he cried eagerly, "you will not promise. But you will tell Pablo Toledo that I have pleaded with you, you will tell him that?"

"Aye, I will tell him that."

Then he gave a cry; but whether it was of relief or pain, I know not.

That same night we camped not far from the city of Cordova, on a broad, open plain. Even at night when the tents were pitched, we could see in the light of the waning moon a broad tract of land, so wide and featureless that it appeared like a vast sea. Only a few olive trees were visible, and not a house was in sight. Indeed, I may here say that from Ciudad Real to Cordova is a great stretch of the most uninteresting country I have ever passed through. Throughout the summer the sun had shone fiercely upon the land, until it had become dry and parched, and the winter rains not yet having begun to fall, it reminded one more of a desert than of a land which I had believed to be fertile beyond words. And here let me say for fear of misleading anyone concerning the condition of the country, that Spain is a land not only of varied climates, but of varied appearance. For while it is as a whole a sad, melancholy country, there are yet tracts of land which are of great richness. Especially is this true of Valencia and of the region around Seville; nevertheless, as far as I saw it, what beauty it has is suggestive of our English autumn time, and not of our English spring time.

But concerning this I must not speak, for I have much to tell concerning my experiences, and the appearance and condition of the country have but little to do with the events, which from this time came thick and fast.

On the night following my conversation with Father Iago Alicante, as we camped a few miles north of Cordova, my mind was naturally much occupied with what he had said. I was alone in my tent, which I had noticed was on the outside ring of the encampment. As I sat and thought, the silence of the night became more and more profound. Apparently, all save the guards had fallen asleep, for no voice could I hear, save that of some wild animals, which gave forth from time to time strange piercing cries. Presently I looked out, and saw that the waning moon had set, and that the night had become dark. Then I laid down and tried to sleep, but no sleep would come to me, so full was my mind, not only of the events I have set down, but of what might happen in the near future. How long I lay I know not; but presently I was startled by hearing the sound of whispering voices close beside me.

Whether I shall be accused of doing that which a man of honour and an English gentleman may not do, I know not, but I listened attentively, especially as I was sure they were the voices of Pablo Toledo and Iago Alicante.

"It is late, and she will be asleep," said the young priest. "To wake her would be to make her cry for help."

"I care not," replied Pablo Toledo. "Have I not arranged the guards so that we may converse together undisturbed? After to-night I shall not be able to speak to her alone. Besides, it is not for you to create difficulties, but to obey me, Master Priest."

"Ah, God be merciful!" said the young priest fearfully.

"He may be, but the King will not be if I tell him. Do you awake her, then. The voice of her confessor will not frighten her. Ah! confessor!" and I heard him laugh scornfully.

"Be merciful, Señor Capitan. I did my best with the young Englishman. I pleaded with him, I told him that his life, my life, her life, depended on her submission."

"Tah! *You* pleaded! *Madre de Dios*, do you not know that he loves her as you do?"

"Silence! I say."

"As *you* do, Master Alicante. Deny it not. You be but a poor priest, to fall in love with one of your penitents. Nevertheless, you do."

"But no word have I spoken to her. Let God testify, I have never by sign or word——"

"You lie, Master Priest, you lie! How else doth she know that you love her? How else would she persuade you to return their swords, and——"

"Silence, I will awake her. Señorita, señorita!"

I heard her voice in reply, and it sent my blood tingling wildly through my veins. What did it all mean? I asked myself again and again.

For sometimes I heard only low whispering voices. Sometimes they seemed angry, at others pleading and tearful, but not one word did I understand. Presently there was a silence, only to be followed by the sound of my own name.

"Señor Ruperto Hamstead," it was the young priest who spoke.

"Yes, what do you wish?"

"Come hither," he replied.

With little ado I crept out into the night, and by the light of the stars, I saw Isabella de Valencia standing by the side of Pablo Toledo.

"Señor Hamstead," said Pablo Toledo to me, "some days ago you said you desired much to meet me, sword to sword."

"Aye," I replied.

"Then must you obey me now. Think not to escape, for though my soldiers have orders to hear nothing save what I command them, yet did you seek to escape——"

"I would not escape, even though it were easy to do so," I replied gravely.

"No?" and he looked at me questioningly. "Methinks you have changed your desires, señor?"

"Yes," I replied.

"And why, señor?"

"That I can tell you when there is need. But not now."

"You will not seek to escape, then? *Palabra de un caballero.*"

"No, I will not."

"Then follow us to yonder secluded spot. There is that to be said which none but ourselves must hear."

I followed, and presently I stood beneath one of the very few olive trees which grew near.

Here we waited a few minutes before he spoke; evidently he was listening and watching to assure himself that we were alone.

"Señor Ruperto Hamstead," he said presently, "I have decided to give you a chance of saving your life."

I waited in silence.

"You know," he went on, "that I have willed to make the señorita my wife," and he bowed towards her. "To this end not only hath my father given his consent, but also the King. But she hath pleaded with the King, so that—well, I am forced to use strong means."

"Well, señor?" I made answer, and then waited for him to continue.

"Well, strange as it may appear that an English clown should have aught to do with a Spanish nobleman's love, yet so it is. The señorita's decision now depends on you."

"On me, señor? Explain."

"Yes, I will explain. Señor Hamstead, if the noble Doña de Valencia becomes my wife, you will live; if she doth not, well, you will die. That I swear by the Holy Cross and the sacred Mass. Aye, and you will die such a death that even the souls of the infidel Moors who now burn in hell may pity you. That also I swear. But the

señorita's answer depends on yours. If you wish to save your life, then will she become my wife."

"Even yet I do not understand," I answered. "Will you explain more fully, and will the señorita also tell me her will?"

At this Señor Pablo Toledo drew himself up proudly, as though he were preparing to give commands, but neither my eyes nor those of the young priest rested on him. They were fixed steadily on the face of the young girl, which we could plainly see by the light of the stars.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HOW I WAS BROUGHT BEFORE THE KING A THIRD TIME

EVEN now the picture comes back to me as I saw it then. Dimly outlined in the near distance was the encampment, the white tents revealing themselves in the darkness. All around us was a great stretch of land, which rose and fell like vast waves, dotted only by a few trees. In the distance we could hear the champing of horses and mules, with an occasional low murmur of muleteers. Otherwise, the silence of night brooded upon us, for not a breath of wind stirred, and, save for the occasional frightened scream of bird and beast, it seemed the land of death. And there beneath this olive tree we stood—three men and this half Spanish, half English maid. Moonless as it was, the air was so clear that neither was hidden from the other's sight. Pablo Toledo's attitude of self-importance was so apparent that at another time I should have laughed at him as a conceited coxcomb. Iago Alicante, on the other hand, was so overwhelmed with terror that no man could help pitying him. And yet his fear was not for the body. He was a man who could face death as calmly as another, and never by word or action suggest a coward. The agony which filled him and the terror which haunted him were ghostly, and not of the flesh at all, as any man could see. As for Isabella de Valencia, she stood as rigid as a statue.

The light of the stars was not enough to reveal her features clearly, but I saw that she walked steadily and strongly, neither was there a quiver in her voice nor a catch in her breath. And this to me was wonderful. For if Iago Alicante spoke truly, her life was in danger even as ours were, and it was surely no little thing for a young maid tenderly reared to be alone in a dreary place with three men.

"It is this, Señor Hamstead," she said quietly, but her voice was filled with scorn. "Señor Pablo Toledo hath long wished me to wed him, and I, who have not desired a husband, have answered him nay. Still he hath persisted, even to my annoyance and discomfort. Now he saith he hath discovered certain things concerning me—and others—which place me in his power. If he reveals these things

to the King, then will the King commit us all to death. But if I will wed him, then will he hold his peace. I shall have the honour to be his wife; Padre Alicante and you will still have the King's smile. This is worthy of Señor Pablo Toledo. He cannot win a wife, so he will seek to buy her—but what of that? It is his excellency's will."

Pablo Toledo gnashed his teeth with rage, and I heard him uttering curses under his breath, but he made no reply to what she said.

"Still I do not understand, señorita," I made answer. "He said that I had something to do with all this. What is it, señorita, and what hath my consent to do with the matter?"

She seemed about to reply, but Iago Alicante broke in feverishly—

"Is it not enough that you bade the señorita see to it that your arms were restored? Is it not enough that she caused the guard from Toledo to be lessened by one half? Is it not enough that she aided and abetted in her mother's escape, while I became her willing tool? Have we not in all these things opposed both Church and King, and there is forgiveness in the heart of neither?"

"Aye," cried Pablo Toledo, "and have you not, Master Priest, dared to love this woman? You, a priest of God!—and will you not, if you die, go to hell unshriven?"

"Still, I do not understand," I said. "If what you say is true, I did only what any man may do. I did but strike a blow for my liberty. I did but use means which any man may use. Why, then, should I fear death? The King must have known this when I was brought before him, and yet he spoke kindly to me, and hath given commands that I may not be treated as a prisoner, but as a guest."

Toledo laughed scornfully. "*Cabeza del nabo*" (head of a turnip), he cried, "are twice two four? Is it cold when it snows? Oh, you fool, you blind fool! But—there, you are English, and may not be blamed for your thick skull! It is enough that I have but to open my mouth, and you die. Aye, and the señorita dies, and my lovelorn priest dies. And such a death, *Santa Dios*, what a death! Now, then, the señorita says that you can save your life if you will. If you bid her close my mouth by marrying me, then will she marry me!"

"And doth she love you?"

"The woman hath not yet been born who could resist loving me," he replied, with a swagger. "It is true she

hath been poisoned by her heretic mother, but what then? Doth the sun warm? And can a woman live long with me, and not yield to me?"

Even then I laughed, so like a turkey cock did he behave; nevertheless, the situation was grave enough, as will plainly be seen.

"Is it true what he saith, señorita?" I asked. "Can he speak that to the King which will mean our death?"

"Yes," she replied with effort.

"But, but——"

"I tell you," she interrupted, "that if he speaketh into the King's ear that which he can prove, we shall all die."

"Aye, and burn in hell!" cried the priest. "Burn in hell, Señor Ruperto! Dwell for ever and ever with grinning, howling devils! For unshriven and unforgiven shall we fall into the burning lake, while never more shall a word of hope or comfort reach us."

"Go to, man," I said. "That is in the hands of a merciful God. If we die, we die, and yet——" Then I paused, for the meaning of it all came to me. How could I see Isabella de Valencia condemned to death?

"And you say," I continued, turning to her, "that if I will, you will marry him. That you will do this to save my life?"

"You have been kind to my mother," she said. "You have risked your life for her. To save her you have come to Spain; to save her you have been placed in this position. Therefore will I do what a daughter may—and ought. I will buy your life—if it is your will!"

"But I will not be bought," I said, for at that moment I would far rather see her die than be wedded to the swaggering mountebank who stood by us. "If you would not wed him, but to save my life, then would I rather my life not be saved. But fear not, señorita. '*Hay un mañana*,' as you Spaniards say; and, as surely as there is a to-morrow, you shall be set free from this braggart."

"Spoken like a man," said the priest; "but, *Madre de Dios*, you do not know, Señor Ruperto. Death! I fear not that; but the wrath of the Church, the curses of the Church! Help, Mother of God, help!"

"This, then, is your answer!" cried Pablo Toledo. "Wait for the wrath of the Señor Don Capitan Pablo de Toledo! Aye, wait, and tremble! For mercy will I not have. Nay, if there be one device more hellish than another whereby you shall be tortured—then, by the Mass, you shall suffer it! As for you, señorita, you will not be my

wife, eh? Think before you confess to loving this thick-skulled Englishman. Think, I say, for——"

"Stop!" she cried. "Love him—Señor Hamstead? Love him! I hate him, hate him! Do you hear? hate him! Hath he not—— But there, I will not speak of these things to one I so much despise; but think not that the Englishman is aught to me. Every time I think of him I am angry with him, neither would I move my finger to save his life, had he not come hither to save my mother. This I say that I may throw back his taunts. He told me I would sell my mother, when I have been selling my soul to save her. He said I was unworthy to have an English mother, when—— But it is enough. Let me go to my rest. And yet I thank him for saying what he hath. I welcome rather the curses of the Church than your blessings."

After that, but little more was said, for we returned each one to his tent, and to the silence of the night. But, as may be imagined, sleep came not to me. I was too bewildered to think clearly, and yet I racked my brain sorely to find a meaning to what had taken place. For, truth to tell, I could not understand the maid's behaviour. She said she would marry Pablo Toledo to save my life, and yet she declared that she hated me; that her sacrifice would be because I had tried to save her mother, for death was more welcome than the thought of being the wife of Pablo Toledo. I say all this confused me much, and, the more I thought, the more puzzling did it all become. Did she, I asked myself, love this young priest who had been the instrument she had used? I thought not, and yet I did not know, for she spoke to him more kindly than to either of us.

The next day we started our journey southward again, for the most part travelling through a rich plain, and keeping the banks of the river Guadalquivir well in sight. The journey, which had not been unpleasant, in spite of my many forebodings, now became dreary and sad. The señorita's words seem to press upon my heart like heavy weights, for, in spite of my proud boasts, my confidence in winning her love had all gone. When she had in her passion told me that she hated me, I could laugh—aye, and vow that I would conquer her; but when, after she had been willing to marry a man that she despised in order to save my life, and yet confess a few minutes afterwards to that same man that she hated me, it seemed as though her heart was a sealed book, which I should never have the right to open. For, as may be imagined, I had ceased to

despise her, also I no longer scorned myself for loving her. Although there were many things I could not understand, I had learnt to believe that she was not indifferent to her mother's welfare, and that, but for her, she might have been a prisoner even now. Nay, more—I began to feel that she had a noble nature, and that, if my mother saw her, she would think of her as one who was worthy to bear a noble English name. Thus, I do not know why, but I no longer felt angry with her—rather a heavy hand seemed to rest upon my heart, while the sky of my life was as black as ink.

Perchance, moreover, this was because a change had come in the weather. I had been told that in Seville the sky was nearly always bright, and that the countryside was of rare beauty. Yet I found nothing but a drear flat country, through which coiled a great brown muddy river. It is true that the country was not so treeless, but, as winter was now upon us, they were all leafless save for the olive and orange trees, whose leaves were grey and parched with the sun of the last summer. The drenching rain which fell, moreover, chilled me to the very bone, and our horses, which splashed through seas of mud, for there are no roads worth speaking of in Spain, drooped their heads wearily, as though they longed for their journey's end. And this came two nights after the one I have spoken of, and right glad was I to see the walls of this old city, even although I believed that my entrance therein meant suffering and death.

No sooner did we enter than I saw that we were not in a Spanish city, but in one which was in nearly every respect Moorish. For not only were the people darker-skinned than those of the north, but the houses and streets everywhere gave signs of Moorish tastes and desires. Not that the streets were narrower than those of Toledo, but I saw that at the back of the streets, and within great walls, were Moorish gardens of great beauty. I thought, too, that the people seemed more cheerful than those of the north, but my observations might not be worth much, for, in truth, my mind was much occupied with other matters.

We stayed not anywhere in Seville, but wended our way along many narrow *calles*, or roads, until I saw rising before me the grey walls of the great cathedral. This we passed quickly, for although its wondrous size and marvellous beauty attracted my mind greatly, my attention was quickly drawn from it by the sight of another building close by.

"Know you what that is?" said Pablo Toledo, who had

not spoken to me for two days, but who now came to my side.

I shook my head.

"That is the Alcazar."

I did not speak.

"It is the palace of the King," he said, "but it also hath dungeons. Some say the bones of dead men lie rotting in them; some say the spirits of those same dead men haunt them. You will have joyous company, dog of a heretic."

"Even if that be the case, I shall be better situated than you," I replied.

"Why?" he asked in astonishment.

"Because I shall not have you to live with," I replied.

He started as though he had been stung.

"The señorita also thinks as I do," I went on mockingly. "You offered her either the dungeons and the death or a place at your side, and she showed her ready wit by choosing the former. Aye, but I do pity you, Señor Capitan, for you cannot get away from yourself."

At this he half drew his sword from its sheath, and then pushed it back again savagely.

"Ah! you English heretic," he cried, "but you shall suffer for this; aye, by the Mass you shall." Then he drew still nearer to me, and deliberately spat in my face. "That is how I regard you," he cried, and went away laughing.

Strange as it may seem, this insult, which at ordinary times would have filled me with black rage, now caused my spirits to rise. The cold weight upon my heart rolled away, and I felt my own man again. For the man made me record a solemn vow. Nay, more than that, I swore that I would never rest until I had made him pay for what he had done—that whether I was bound or free, well or ill, that insult should be wiped out. And this not only nerved my arm, but gave hope to my heart. I felt that, in spite of all I had heard, I should not die until Pablo Toledo and I had met man to man, and until I had choked him with his own words.

A little later I had entered the King's palace, but I saw naught of it, for without ado, and without knowing what had become of those I cared for, I was placed in a dark room, where, while not badly treated, I was closely watched; neither was I allowed to have either fresh air or exercise.

How long I stayed there I know not; but the time was long. Day succeeded day, and week succeeded week without aught happening. During the early part of the ti m

Padre Sanchez came at intervals to cure me of my heresy, but he seemed, as I thought, to grow careless concerning my conversion, owing to the other interests which occupied him.

I asked him many times concerning the señorita, but nothing would he tell me. Rather he made haste to leave me whenever I mentioned her name. Neither did I learn anything concerning the young priest Iago Alicante.

"You will know all too soon for your comfort, my son," he said once. "Let me pray you to conform speedily, for there is no forgiveness in hell."

And this was nearly all I learnt during the many weeks I stayed there, until I was, as may be imagined, sore distraught. For although I still held to it that I should not die until I had paid the debt I owed to Pablo Toledo, my heart ached terribly for Isabella de Valencia. Hating me as she did, I still loved her with a great love, and many hours did I spend devising impossible means whereby I might discover where she was and escape with her. But concerning this, hope began presently to die; for the more I reflected on our position, the more impossible did it seem that I should ever see her again. Time after time did I rack my brains to understand the meaning of it all, but all my thinking led me to no satisfactory conclusion. For how could I, closely imprisoned, not only escape, but find her, and take her to a place of safety? For escape by myself I never dreamed of, although I believe I might have accomplished it had I made the endeavour. But what profit was my own escape, if I had to leave her at the mercy of those who brought, as it seemed to me, nameless charges against her? No, no; I was promised that we should be brought together before the King, and this was my one hope.

"What month are we in?" I asked of the gaoler, after many, many days.

"January."

Then, when many other days had passed away, I asked again—

"What month is it?"

"March."

"Is the King in Seville?"

"No."

"When will he return?"

"I know not."

"Be there many prisoners here?"

"Many prisoners! When hath there not been prisoners in Seville?"

"Tell me who they are."

But to this demand I received no reply, although I pleaded hard.

During these months I saw but little light, nor breathed pure air, and yet so healthy was the body God had given me that I suffered no ailment. Moreover, I exercised myself often as well as I was able. Each day I used all my muscles severely. I leaped, I ran around my prison, I accomplished all sorts of cat-like tricks, which, as a learned doctor hath told me since, benefited me much, and perhaps kept me from many ailments. Moreover, I prayed more than ever I had prayed before in my life, and this comforted and strengthened me much. For while I prayed, God seemed very near to me, and then it was that my prison house seemed not so dreary, neither did hope die away.

But on these things I will not dwell, for they will be of little interest to those who read this history, especially as I have yet many things to tell, which even yet I have not ceased to wonder at.

It must have been early in April, I take it, when the King, who had been called from Seville to Lisbon almost as soon as he had reached it, returned thither again. Even although I was alone in the darkness, I felt that events of importance were happening, and as a consequence, when my gaoler bade me follow him to the King's presence, I was not one whit surprised, neither was my gait unsteady when I entered a great hall which was built after the Moorish fashion, and in which the King sat.

As far as I could judge, nearly the same people had congregated as when I had been brought before him at the Escurial, but I paid heed only to one, and that was to the woman who during the months of silence I had learnt to love more and more.

"This matter hath been delayed long owing to urgent affairs," said the King. "Still it is doubtless the will of God, else why should I be called away? Grave charges were hinted at, which up to this time I have not been able to examine. Let me hear them now. It is my will."

At that my heart beat fast, for Father Parsons began to speak, and the spirit of cruelty breathed through his every word.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE KING'S COMMAND

"I GRIEVE to trouble your Majesty with this thing," he said, "since it is a matter which the Holy Fathers of the Church could very well deal with, but your Majesty has expressed the desire that it should be brought before you in this fashion, and your Majesty's lightest wish is law."

At this he paused, and the King nodded to him to proceed.

"The will of Heaven hath often been made known to your Majesty by means of dreams, visions, and prophetic warnings," went on Father Parsons. "This is a direct sign that you are regarded with special favour in Heaven, and that you, above all, are chosen to show forth the will of the Most High. Yet even these special manifestations of holy saints and angels are fraught with danger, for there be some who, to their own destruction, will seek to deceive the very elect."

"What mean you? What direct charge do you make?" said the King. "Hitherto I have not had time to inquire closely into the matter. The young English heretic was brought to me, because a special miracle had been wrought to save his life. I received him kindly, and ordered his speedy conversion because of the things which have been revealed to me concerning such an one. Since that time you have told me that this alleged miracle should be inquired into, seeing you had reason to believe there had been much deceit. I understand you have made such inquiries?"

"Yes, sire, I have."

"And have you discovered aught?"

"Aye, I have discovered that the three Englishmen, one of whom is here a prisoner, and who hath now been closely guarded many months, bribed the gaolers to admit disguised as priests certain infidel Jews. These Jews, for a certain sum of money, cunningly devised a means whereby the real image of El Cristo was taken away, and in its place was put a false unhallowed figure full of mechanical springs. Thus it came about that when the figure of El Cristo was appealed to, these infidel Jews, being hidden,

caused the mechanical springs to work, whereby the arm moved, and all thought that a miracle had been wrought."

"*Madre de Dios!*" cried the King, rising to his feet. "If this be true, the lost souls of infidel Jews shall pity him who hath done this!"

"I can find those who can vouch for it," said Father Parsons, with a cruel, mocking smile on his lips.

"And the gaoler, where is he?"

"He hath escaped, sire."

"But you are certain of this thing?"

"Aye, for after much searching, the cunningly contrived figure was found in the house of a Jew, fashioned as I have described."

"And these infidels whom the Englishmen bribed, what hath become of them?"

"Some have been taken and punished by death; others, I grieve to say, have escaped. Search hath continually been made for the two English heretics who have escaped, together with the English women they spirited away, but as yet in vain."

"You mean the Señora de Valencia and her tiring woman?"

"Yes, sire!"

"They must be found—they must be found, I say!"

"They will be found, sire; no effort is being spared. Still, we have the man, Rupert Hamstead, who hath concocted this blasphemy. He hath been safely guarded, but because of your desire hath up to now been treated with leniency."

"Where is he? Let him stand forth."

"Ruperto Hamstead, stand forth!" I heard someone say, and like a man in a dream I moved two steps towards the King.

"I will call witnesses to prove the truth of what I have said," said Father Parsons.

"No, no! I desire to hear them not. You say you have inquired into this, and have satisfied yourself?"

"Yes, sire!"

"That he hath knowingly connived at this sacrilege to save his life and gain my smile?"

"Yes, sire!"

"That is enough. Let him suffer what such as he should suffer. Let him be spared nothing—nothing. It is the will of God. But let his sufferings take place publicly, that men everywhere may know that I will not be mocked, and that they may realise the doom of those who would mock or deny our holy faith."

At this he prepared to leave the room as though everything were proved. No further question asked he, neither did he trouble to have witnesses called. And this, knowing my innocence, caused a great anger to come to me. It gave me strength to speak, moreover, for up to now I had listened like a man who had been well-nigh stunned by a cruel blow.

"This is a lie, your Majesty!" I cried. "I swear I am innocent of what has been laid to my charge!"

For a moment he seemed so overcome with astonishment that he sat down.

"Do you dare to say that the holy father hath spoken a lie?" he said.

"I say that either he hath lied or that he hath been misinformed," I replied, "and I pray you not to send a man to his death, without yourself making inquiries, for I swear I am guiltless of this matter."

At this he rose to his feet again.

"The oath of a heretic!" he said scornfully. "But stay; I gave commands for thy conversion. Dost thou conform?"

"I seek to find the truth," I replied, "and I pray you to use your wisdom in this matter."

"As though I could trouble myself to seek to justify a heretic," he said scornfully. "You know my will, holy fathers. Let him suffer and die as he deserves, and spare no pains to bring to justice all who may be connected with this unholy deed."

In spite of myself my heart sank within me, for now I could not see a ray of light anywhere. I looked eagerly around the room, but nowhere could I see one sign of pity. Father Parsons was smiling with vindictive triumph, while Señor Toledo and his son Pablo sought not to conceal their cruel joy. In truth, there was on the face of the latter such a look as I trust I may never see again, for it revealed the unholy triumph of a fiend, and not the victory of a human being.

But a moment later a new feeling possessed, not only me, but everyone else present. The King, who had taken two steps towards the door, stood still, while the laugh of triumph which Pablo Toledo gave ended in a cry of fierce anger. Many others, too, stared open-mouthed, while angry murmurs passed from lip to lip. And this was caused by a woman's voice speaking clearly and steadily, a voice which to me was sweeter than any music outside heaven.

"I claim to speak, your Majesty. I deny what Father Parsons hath said. That man is innocent!"

I turned my eyes towards Señorita de Valencia as she spoke, and then I prayed God to forgive me for the cruel words I had spoken to her.

"Your name, woman?" said the King, passing his hands across his dull-looking eyes, as though he could not see clearly.

"Isabella de Valencia, only child of Don Fernandio Basilio de Valencia," she replied.

"And you claim to speak, and declare this man innocent after what the holy father hath said?"

"I do."

"Take her away. She is mad!" cried many voices.

"Nay, she shall speak," said the King. Perchance he was moved by the beauty of her face, for, although she looked pale and worn, never had I seen her so lovely as on that day. "What would you say, maiden? Our ear is ever open to the faithful daughters of Spain, and especially to those who are the children of our noble cavaliers who have served us so well."

"I say, your Majesty, that Rupert Hamstead is innocent of that which hath been laid to his charge. This I swear."

"But Father Parsons declares that he saw the arm move, and that afterwards a false image hath been discovered."

"I swear he is innocent, your Majesty. I swear that he is ignorant of all these things."

"Then believe you that a miracle was really wrought?" asked the King, who seemed much moved.

She hesitated a second, and then replied:

"No, your Majesty."

"Then if he is innocent, someone else is guilty."

"Yes, sire!"

"Know you who is the guilty person?"

"Yes, sire!"

"Who, then?"

"I am guilty, sire!"

"You?"

"Yes, sire!"

For a moment a great hush fell upon us all. We could hear the beating of our hearts, while even the King stood aghast, and incapable of speech.

"You did this blasphemous thing?"

"Yes, sire!"

"Why?"

"To save my mother and her old servant."

Again the King paused, and by the look in his eyes I thought he was puzzled.

"But how could you think to save your mother by such means?"

"I believed that these men were sent by God to take my loved ones away from those who sought their death. Once before had they saved Esther Truscott, even on the day when she was dragged to the stake on the Circo Romano."

"Aye, I remember hearing about it," said the King, like a man speaking to himself.

"For this they were taken and cast into prison, and after this I did many things to try and save their lives."

"Aye," said the King—forgetting, as I believe, his exalted position in his interest in her story—"and what then?"

"When I knew they were to be tried at El Cristo de la Vega, I knew also that an appeal would be made to the figure on the altar. Then did I conceive this thing in order to save their lives."

"Your Majesty, she is mad," said more than one voice.

"I am not mad," she said. "I did this, and the man Ruperto Hamstead is innocent. He knew naught of it, neither he nor his companions. They were as much astonished as the others."

"But again I ask, how could saving these men also save your mother?" asked the King, still forgetting the horror of her deed in his desire to know the workings of the young maid's mind.

"I knew that such an event would give them much consideration, and I believed that you would desire to see them. I knew also that you had commanded my mother to your presence out of respect for my noble father. Moreover, I saw that they were strong, courageous men, and would dare much to save my mother."

"Then it was you who caused their weapons to be restored?"

"It was I, sire," and her voice trembled not one whit, neither did either her eyelids or her mouth quiver.

"But there is something else," said the King. "You could not do these things alone. You could not have taken away the holy image alone, neither could you have placed a false one in its place. Nor, indeed, could you alone have restored the weapons of these Englishmen."

At this she was silent, and, as I thought, her face became paler.

"She is mad, your Majesty," said Señor Toledo. "Her troubles have bereft her of her right faculties."

"Silence!" said the King angrily, and I saw by his

face that his mind was slowly grasping the issues of the strange confession he had been hearing.

"Had you an accomplice?"

"Yes, sire."

"Tell me his name."

She opened her mouth as if to speak, but no word escaped her.

"You know his name?"

"Yes, sire!"

"Tell me his name, I command you."

"No, sire, I cannot tell you."

"You refuse!" And the King spoke as though he were as much astonished as angry.

"I will not tell you his name," she replied.

"Why will you not tell?" he asked, still, as I believed, much wrought upon by her beauty and her strange confession.

She remained silent and motionless.

"Is it some man that you love?"

"As you mean it—no, sire!"

"Then why will you not tell?"

"Because it is not right that I should. He was but my instrument; mine was the hand that guided it. He had no will, no thought in the matter. I planned it all, willed it all. I will bear the penalty."

"But tell me his name. This shall be borne in mind."

"No, sire, I cannot tell."

"You refuse to tell your King!"

"I cannot, sire—I cannot!"

"Arouse me not to anger, maiden," and I saw his pale, unhealthy face grow red with rage. "For the last time, I command you—tell me the name of your accomplice."

"No, sire, I cannot."

For a moment he was silent, then he stamped his foot in anger. As he did so, a cry like that of a man in agony escaped him. As I was told, while at the Escurial, he suffered much in this foot, and so sensitive was it to pain that he could not touch it without sore torment. The stamp which he gave, therefore, caused him such agony that he lost control of himself.

"Throw both her and him into the dungeons!" he cried, "the dark ones at the entrance of the garden! And see that the truth is got from her. She is a heretic herself as well as her mother! Let my will be done. The peas, the screws, the rack—let them all be applied until she hath told the villain's name. After that, let them both die."

Then he hobbled out of the room, and I knew by his

face that he suffered scarcely less agony than that to which he had doomed the woman who, by her great deed of sacrifice, had sought to save my life.

Of what took place after that, I have but little knowledge, so overwhelmed was I by what I had seen and heard. For although I have, according to my remembrance, faithfully set down how Isabella de Valencia sought to prove my innocence of the charge Father Parsons had brought against me, yet so overwrought was I during the whole time, that doubtless much escaped my notice, and many words were uttered which under ordinary circumstances I should have remembered. Therefore, being as it were like a man stunned, I realised scarce anything until presently I found myself in a foul dungeon, which had evidently been dug out of the soil.

For some little time, moreover, I could not well connect the things which I had heard and seen, but this was not for long. As I thought of what this maid had done, my heart grew warm, and then my brain became clear and strong. It was then that I saw the meaning of much that had been dark to me. This maid, whom I had declared to be unworthy to be the daughter of an Englishwoman, had all along been planning for her liberty. It was because of this that she desired me to write this letter ; it was she who had been matching her wits against those of Señor Toledo and Father Parsons. It was she who had caused the supposed miracle to be worked on our behalf. It was she who abetted her mother's escape. Moreover, she had done it all warily, so warily that at the time she was not suspected of these things.

Concerning the name of her accomplice there could be no mistake or mystery. The young priest, Iago Alicante, had done her bidding. I recalled his wild prayer for forgiveness and his frantic appeals. Because he loved her, he could not refuse to do her bidding, and she had used her power over him to try and save her mother.

" God forgive me for misjudging her ! " I prayed again and again, for now I realised her nobility, now I saw a woman as far above others as the stars were above the earth. There was no need for her to speak. Evidently Father Parsons had so framed his story that no suspicion could fall upon her, and yet, knowing that thereby she was dooming herself to the anger of Church and King, she had told her story.

" Oh, how I love her ! " I cried aloud, my heart all aflame, and even as I heard myself saying this came the determination to save her. Hitherto I had done nothing,

but now I must act. Hitherto I could do nothing, for it had come to me that she would be safe until the King's return, but now I must save her. But how ?

I saw now, moreover, that Señor Toledo and his son together with Father Parsons had so framed their story that all the blame should fall upon me and none upon her. Doubtless they had reasons for doing this. Doubtless they knew of what she had done, and were also aware of the part Iago Alicante had taken in the matter. This fact explained all that I had seen and heard, and I felt sure they had hoped that their knowledge would cause her to be their willing slave. I felt sure, moreover, that she had defied them to do their worst, and they, discovering her mind, had devised some other means of bending her will according to their desire.

At first I could not help wondering that the King had not remarked upon the great disparity of Father Parsons' statements, and those which the señorita had afterwards made ; but as all the world knows, he was not a man of judgment ; rather he was carried hither and thither by his passions and his desires.

All these thoughts and many more came rushing into my mind during the time which I spent in the dark dungeon into which I had been cast, and a thousand times did I upbraid myself for being a blind, witless clown.

Had I the brains of a rabbit, I told myself again and again, I should have known all these things, and have long before led her into liberty. Even yet, however, I could not explain everything. I reflected that she might have escaped with her mother on the day that Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth went away with the gipsies. Why, then, had she not done so ? But rack my brains as I might, the meaning of this, as well as that of many other things, came not to me.

But how to save her ? That was now the great question. I realised the situation. We were both in prison, both in dungeons. I called to mind the King's command, and then my heart gave a great leap. We were in dungeons at the entrance of the gardens. How many were there ? Possibly only three or four. If this were so, we might be close together ! The thought filled me with delight. Ah ! but how long would she be kept in her prison before torture was applied ? The King in his passion had commanded torture. I must waste no time.

Not a ray of light reached me, therefore I could not tell how I was situated ; so I crept slowly around, feeling the sides of my prison with my hands. As well as I could make

out, the place was well-nigh round, and measured, it might be, twelve feet across. After a time, I discovered an aperture which I took to be a doorway, but which presently turned out to be a place intended for prayer. After fully examining this aperture with my fingers, and satisfying myself that it was not a doorway, I continued my search, until I presently gave a cry of joy, for I knew that I had found a doorway.

"This doorway must lead somewhere," I thought, "but where? Can it be possible that I am divided from her by only a few inches of wood?"

I listened intently, but all was silent as death.

"If I could only break down that door," I thought. "Let me try its strength"; but before I could put my thought into deeds, I heard a murmur of voices. I therefore remained quiet, and made no movement whatever, for I knew that if I were discovered in making an attempt to escape I should be guarded with greater vigilance. Hard as it was, therefore, to keep still, I waited for a long time in silence; and in this I was wise, for ere long I heard the sound of voices again, which was presently followed by a flash of light, and the opening of my prison door.

CHAPTER XXX

THE PASSAGE FROM THE ALCAZAR TO THE TORRES DEL ORO

A GAOLER entered bearing a candle in one hand, and a plate of food in another. At the door stood another man, who was evidently his comrade.

"A good appetite, Señor Englishman," he said, with a laugh. "Yet why you should be fed it puzzles me to know. A waste of food and wine, I call it. Feed one day and burn the next! Hah! hah!"

The man's voice was thick, and, if I mistook not, he had been drinking. If this were so, his tongue might be loosed.

"Have you brought me much wine?" I asked.

"Aye," he said, "a quart. If you were to be a prisoner long, you would have none, but it is our rule to give a man plenty of both good food and wine when he is to be burned the next day. Hah! hah! foolishness, I call it, and a waste of good victuals. But what would you? The holy fathers will have it so."

"Then I am to be burned to-morrow?" I said, noting that the man was well-nigh drunk.

"Aye, to-morrow. But fear not, man; you are to have a priest, I am told, which is more than you, being a heretic, deserve. Besides, I have heard that if the faggots burn well, a man suffers naught after the first strong flame. It is not you who are to be pitied—it is the señorita."

"Aye," I said, keeping myself as well under control as I was able; "and are you fond of wine?"

"By the Mass, and am I not! Already, the King having lately come to Seville, we have made merry, and both my mate and I have drunk both well and long. Let the King come often, I say, for when he is here good wine is plenteous. Why, that which I have brought you is rarely strong. Is that not so, Carlos?"

"Yes, Matéo, very strong. Ah! by the Mass, I would I had the drinking of it instead of this English heretic."

The man spoke with a hiccup, and evidently their conviviality had unloosed their tongues. If I could only lead them to tell me the things I wanted to know!

"Come, eat your supper, Señor Englishman. Hark! The clock strikes ten, and we have promised to meet our companions in the wine shop in the Calle del Guzman el Bueno. Eat, man—quickly, for I must take the jug and the plate away with me."

"Nay, be not over hasty," I said. "I have been lonely for many months, and the sound of your voice does me good. You are both right pleasant fellows. Besides, you say I am to be burned to-morrow."

"Aye, to-morrow, at noon. I tell you, señor, we will be there, and, heretic though you are, we will bid you *Va con Dios*."

"And the señorita, will she burn with me?" I said, trying to speak carelessly.

"By San José, but you be a cool-headed *caballero*, señor," said one, with a laugh. "Mostly the heretics cry aloud for help, or else they sit like men deaf and dumb and paralysed. Aye, but you are a brave man. No, señor, the señorita will not burn with you. What would you? She is of noble family, and reared in the faith. When she will die I know not. Possibly not for many days. She is to have the torture, man, the torture. Aye, I would like to see her as she walks with her bare feet upon the peas. I would like to see her placed on the rack and hear her scream."

"Oh, she will not scream," said the other. "She is a Valencia, and as proud as Don Guzman. When we took her food just now, she would not speak to us. She hath also refused to see a holy father. But what would you? She is the daughter of an English mother, else would she not have done such a terrible thing. By the Mass, I wonder the saints did not strike her dead. But eat, señor, eat, for we must go."

"Nay, nay," I said. "Surely there is no need yet. I long for company, and you be pleasant señors. Then, too, you be *caballeros*. I am an English *caballero*, and you are Spanish. Surely you come of noble families?"

"I am Matéo de Castile," replied the man proudly, and I saw I had pleased them by my words, for there is no man under heaven so full of vanity as a Spaniard. "My friend is Carlos de Andalucia. *Si*, señor, we have good blood in our veins."

"Then, señors, I ask you to drink my wine. I am not thirsty. I will eat and you shall drink."

"*Buena*," was the reply. "No one will know. The priest is not coming to you till to-morrow, and the señorita is in the next dungeon but one—is it the next but one, or the next but two, Matéo? Anyhow, from here we can hear everything. Aye, let us drink, then," and each took a deep draught of the wine.

"Oh, that I had a gallon instead of a quart," I thought. "Still, I must make the most of my chance."

"This is not an ordinary prison, is it?" I asked.

"Prison, señor; this is no prison—and yet it is, seeing there are four dungeons here, in which prisoners are often put—but really is part of a tunnel, and the tunnel leads to the Torres del Rio, half a mile from here."

"Ah, is there a tower by the river?" I asked.

"Aye, there is. A watch tower, built by the Moors. Many call it the Torres del Oro, because it gleams yellow when the sun is setting."

"Ah, a watch tower," I said; "then I suppose soldiers are there?"

"No, señor, no; only an old man, but he is very wakeful, and he gives the signals. Oh, and he never drinks, never, never! He sits alone in the little room at the mouth of the tunnel, and thinks and dreams, but never drinks. Oh, what a fool he is!"

"Aye, but we do, Carlos, and there is at least a pint left. You do not desire it, excellency?"

"Oh, no—drink, *Ustedes* (your honours). I desire it not. I am thinking of the poor señorita, who tried to save my life, and who committed such a terrible deed of blasphemy."

"Ah! but she can pay for many Masses, and then—but doth she not deserve to suffer?"

"Aye, to take *El Cristo* from the altar and to put in its stead an unholy image! Saints preserve us! But there, she is nobly born, and, as you say, next to her is another dungeon, and after that, the long black tunnel to the Torres del Oro. It is said, moreover, that her dungeon is haunted. A beautiful Moorish maid was kept there in the time of Ferdinand and Isabella, and she died there. A noble Spaniard loved her, and tried to convert her, but she died unrepentant."

"Was she burned?" I asked.

"Nay, the noble don killed her with his own sword to save her, and then he killed himself. It is said that they both come back and moan and moan. Eh, Carlos, it is my turn to drink."

"Ah, well," said the other, "if they come back, the señorita cannot get away from them. Neither can any sound be heard from any of these dungeons—that is, in the palace above. Ah, *Madre de Dios*, they are deep down, and a man might howl himself hoarse and no one could hear him. Besides, the doors are locked, and I have the keys here. But the señor has eaten his supper, and we have drunk the wine, and—by the Mass, I believe I am *borracho*—I have drunk too much wine. Hic——I am drunk!"

Without waiting a second, I struck him a heavy blow between the cheek and the ear which laid him senseless,

and then turned to the other. He, seeing what I had done, staggered towards me, but he, too, was overcome with drink. Ordinarily he would have been no match for me, being at least forty pounds lighter than I, and having no quality of muscle, so that in his half-drunken condition I had little trouble in dealing with him.

In less time than it takes me to tell, I had pulled off from the taller of the two men a well-made garment which the Spaniards call a *casaca*, and which they wear beneath their capes; I also took his *manto* (a long garment which hangs from the shoulder), together with his weapons and hat. This done, I searched for the keys, which the man named Carlos carried, and prepared to depart.

Both men lay as though they were dead, but I knew they were not, although the blows I gave them were not those from a maiden's hand. They were only stunned, and would wake to consciousness in a few minutes; but even then I imagined they would be too drunk to make much ado, even although what they had said about the depth of the dungeons was true.

A few seconds later, holding the candle in one hand and the keys in the other, I was in the next prison, and having carefully locked the door behind me I looked around me. I saw that this contained two doors: the one through which I had passed, and the other on the opposite side. This latter one I unlocked without difficulty, and then found myself in a passage, which evidently led to the garden entrance. I dared not stay long to examine it, however: too much depended on my speed of action. I much marvelled that no one was here, keeping watch, but I imagined that the guard would be at the outer door! so holding my candle high I looked around me to try and find the door which led to the other *calabozos*, as the Spaniard called them, and having found it I unlocked it with trembling hands.

"Oh, God help me!" I cried, and then I gave a cry of dismay. The place was empty. I looked around me and searched every crevice; but there was nothing, nothing!

"She hath been taken to some other prison," I thought; "but where? I cannot try to escape without her! Ah, what is that?"

It sounded like a human voice, but I was not sure

"No one must enter," I thought, as I locked the door behind me. "Ah, but there must be another door here, even as there are in the others! Ah!"

"Oh, Lord Christ, help!"

It was her voice. God be praised, she was near!

Again I examined the walls of the dungeon, and then

I discovered the door, which I had before failed to find. It was placed close to the little aperture which had been dug out for a *prie dieu*, and a minute later I had entered another cell.*

The candle now burnt low, but there was still an inch or more left, and by its light I saw the woman I had come to seek kneeling and praying

"Señorita!"

She turned and saw me, but did not know who it was. Wearing the gaoler's clothes, she took me for one of them.

"Señorita, be of good cheer; I have come to save you."

This I said in English, whereupon she started up and gazed around her like one in great fear.

"Señor Hamstead!"

"Yes, I am going to save you, to take you to your mother."

"How came you here?"

"There is not time to tell, señorita. But come, I will lead you to liberty."

For a moment she seemed to be struggling with herself, and then I saw a change come over her. The fear had gone out of her eyes, and in them had come a look of defiance.

"And if I do not choose to go with you?" she said haughtily.

"I shall still take you," I replied; my heart had grown angry again. I knew not why it was, but each time we had been alone together, she had aroused a feeling of rage within me, even although my heart was hot with love.

"You take me against my will!"

"Yes, against your will."

"You have boasted before, Señor Englishman," she said. "When we were at the Escurial, you said you would take me away. But did you? Did you even make the attempt?"

"That was because I was not a fool," I replied.

"During the journey from the Escurial to Seville, when Pablo Toledo played into your hands—what then?"

"I had given him my word of honour."

She laughed scornfully, whereupon I could have struck her, so great was my rage; yet could I also have fallen at her feet and pleaded for her love.

"For months have I been immured in Seville, but what did you? Aye, I heard of you. You ate your food and

* The cells described in the foregoing pages may be seen to-day under the Alcazar at Seville. The tunnel between them and the Torres del Oro, which stands on the banks of the Guadalquivir, also remains, although it is now carefully built up at both ends, and is never used.—J. H.

drank your wine, yet you stayed in a prison from which a child might have escaped."

"And that is a lie, mistress," I replied, "and the taunt is an unworthy one. For even although I could have escaped, I knew not where to find you, and I had vowed that I would never escape until I could take you with me. Besides, I was told again and again that, though closely confined, naught of harm would happen to you until the King's return, and perhaps not even them. But, come, you must go with me now!"

"Whither?"

"Whither I shall lead you," I replied grimly.

"There are worse things than death," she said.

"And they?" I asked.

"One is to bear the company of a man that one despises and hates."

At this I turned on my heel to go without her, for after all, a man is more deeply wounded by the words of the woman he loves than by those from one for whom he cares not. Besides, her hatred and anger were unreasonable, even although I was a heretic and an Englishman. Still, I did not go far away; I remembered what the men had said, and then I could not leave her. How in truth could I, when that very day she had aroused the King's rage in order to save my life?

"You shall have my company no longer than is necessary, mistress," I said. "As soon as I can deliver you from danger, you shall go where you will. Nay, I will not even seek to take you to your mother if you desire it not. But you sought to save my life to-day, and now I save yours."

"How?" she asked, keeping her face away from me.

"By leading you from this prison to the Torres del Oro, by the banks of the river. It is guarded by one man only, and we can escape him."

She turned her face towards me, and I saw that her eyes burned with a strange light.

"Try me not too far, señorita," I went on. "Did I not love you with the love of a mad young fool, I had left you here, in spite of what you have done for me. Besides, the candle burns low, and it is full half a mile from here to the tower."

"How did you get here?" she asked. "How did you escape the gaolers?"

"That is a story for another time," I replied; "already we have wasted precious time. See, I will unlock this door, and it leads to the tunnel; now, come!"

"You know I hate you, despise you!" she said, her teeth set and her eyes gleaming.

"You may hate me, for my time hath not yet come," I replied, "but despise me you do not. Aye, and the hate will pass away, and ere long you shall pray me to stay by your side."

"Never, never! why——"

"What?" I asked, seeing her pause.

"Nothing; only I long to curse you!"

"Curse me if you will, mistress, but you come with me! You know you long to come, you know you have been fighting against your desires all the time you have spoken. Take my hand."

I held it out as I spoke, and seeing her hesitate I repeated my request.

"You tried to save my life," I went on. "You did a noble thing, señorita; so noble and grand was it, that I cannot believe you hate me, even in spite of what you say."

"Oh, but I do, I do. Leave me here to die. Oh, you will be kind if you will do that."

"Do you really wish it, señorita?" I said. "Do you? Well, a man cannot bear everything. Be it as you will; there, I hold out my hand for the last time, and if you take it not now I leave you here in the darkness and to your doom."

Holding the flickering candle in my left hand, I held out my right to her, watching her eyes as I did so. But it was not hatred I saw there, I could have sworn that—it was fear. And yet it was not the fear of death. She had braved that in the presence of the King even without flinching. It was fear of another nature, but what it was I could not tell. Presently our eyes met, and as if by magic hers changed. I felt myself gaining the mastery over her. She seized my hand feverishly.

"Let us go," she said; "let us go. I must find my mother; but oh, if you only knew how I hate you!"

"But you obey me, mistress," I said. We walked along the gloomy passage, which was barely wide enough for us to pass side by side.

After we had gone some little distance my heart grew tender again, and there rose up within me a great overmastering love which made me ashamed of the way I had spoken to her.

"Are you afraid?" I said.

"No."

"Are you weary?"

"No. How did you get away from those two men?"

"Easily. They were Spaniards," and I laughed carelessly, because I wanted her to think well of me.

"You are sure they will not find us, follow us?"

"They are both locked in the dungeon where I was placed."

"You did it?"

"Aye; these are the keys they carried."

The light, which had been flickering lower and lower, went out, and then I thought her hand fastened itself more closely around mine.

"I trust it is not far," I said, as I felt my way along in the utter darkness. "Do not be afraid, señorita; it cannot be far, and I, by keeping my hand against the side, cannot go wrong."

"Señor," she said presently, "I called you a coward. You are not a coward. Will you forgive me? I hate you, but you are not a coward!"

At this my heart grew more tender towards her, and words of love were again on my lips, but I never spoke them, for a strange sound attracted my attention.

"Hark, what is that?" I said.

I held her hand in mine while I listened. Surely, surely there was the sound of footsteps.

"Are we followed?" she asked.

"No, the sound is before us, not behind. We must be at the Torres del Oro. Yes, we are; here are some steps."

Again we listened, and this time we heard not only footsteps, but the sound of human voices.

"It will be a storm, I think!"

"Aye, there be black clouds. If it rains, the faggots will burn badly to-morrow. But I must go! *Buenas noches*, Tito. Sleep well."

"Aye, I think I may sleep a little to-night, for the city is quiet."

"You fear not to spend the night alone in the tower?"

"Why should I? I wear a relic of my patron saint close to my heart. Padre Timoteo gave it me five years ago last Candlemas, and he told me it would keep away all evil spirits. Besides, I have said my prayers. *Buenas noches*."

The footsteps died away, and silence reigned.

"I think we can try now," I said; then, holding her with my left hand, and the sword I had taken from the gaoler in my right, we silently crept up some stone stairs, until I felt my head touch a trap-door.

"Do not be afraid for me," she said. "You shall not find me helpless."

Thereupon I put forth my strength, and the trap-door slowly moved.

CHAPTER XXXI

A JOURNEY FROM MIDNIGHT TO MORNING

"*MADRE de Dios! Che es esta?*"

Before he had time to speak another word I had sprung upon the little man who was the keeper of the tower, and held him fast.

"There is nothing for you to be alarmed about, Señor Tito," I said with a laugh, for though I knew dangers surrounded us, the joy in my heart caused me to make light of them.

"But, but——" he struggled to say.

"Be silent, Señor Tito," I said. "I am in a dangerous mood just now, although I speak pleasantly. This sword is sharp, and with it I could easily silence you once and for all. But this I do not wish to do, for I am not one who can lightly kill such a man as you. Nevertheless, if you make a noise, I must."

As I spoke I saw the señorita gazing eagerly around the room, her eyes gleaming like coals of fire.

"You must obey the señor," she said quietly. "I think he means to keep his word."

"What do you wish me to do?" said Tito.

"You must answer our questions first. Is anyone coming to you to-night?"

"Aye, two soldiers come at midnight."

"What is the hour now?"

"It is past eleven."

"Then, señor," and she spoke to me, "we must bind him securely, and we must gag him so that he cannot utter a cry. After that we must leave him. Before midnight we must be far away."

She spoke almost in a tone of command, and yet because she spoke more kindly her voice was to me as sweet as the sound of a running brook. There was but little light in the room, for only one candle burnt in the tower-keeper's room, but there was enough for me to see her face plainly. It was no longer pale and haunted, as when she was alone in her prison, while the fearful look had gone from her eyes. Her hair hung in waving masses over her shoulders and down even to her waist, and to me she seemed the embodiment of womanly beauty and courage. Hat or cloak she

had none, and while she was not clad in a way befitting her, her very *dishabille* made her to me more lovely.

In less time than it takes me to write I had bound Tito securely, and while he had no difficulty in breathing, I saw to it that he was not able to cry aloud. While I bound him the señorita took an old cape from the wall, and by means of the hood she covered her face entirely. She also took old Tito's sword, and by means of a girdle fastened it to her side.

"Farewell, Tito," I said. "I will not tell you who we are. It will be all the better for you when the soldiers come."

With that we let ourselves out, and having locked the door behind us, stood by the bank of the river.

"Thank God!" I cried, as I breathed the cool night air.

For a moment the sense of freedom almost stunned me. For long months I had been closely immured and carefully guarded, so that in spite of my most sanguine hopes I saw no means of escape. My mind, moreover, was filled with fears for the maid I loved—aye, and fears for myself also, for even although I might set her free, she would, I felt sure, retain her hatred for me. Even an hour before, only the black night of despair reigned, while now I stood beneath the great dome of God's blue sky, and she I loved stood by my side. It was true we were friendless in a strange city. Were we again captured no possibility of escape would there be, while cruel tortures and a ghastly death would await us both. Moreover, we were without money and without horses, neither had I a friend in the whole of Spain, save Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth, who, like myself, were in constant danger. But that daunted me not one whit, neither did it cause one tremor in my heart, for God hath so made man that, when he is beside the maid he loves, he can cast aside fear, and laugh even in the face of death.

At our feet rolled sullenly the tawny waters of the river Guadalquivir, on whose banks, here and there, a flickering light gleamed. Moonless though the night was, we could see the domed roofs of ancient church towers, while, even as we stood there, we heard the deep tones of one of the great cathedral bells.

"Whither go we?" It was the señorita who spoke.

"To Granada," I said.

"Know you the way?"

"No, save that it is due east from Seville."

She spoke no other word, and together we walked away.

"You feel no fear?"

"No, I fear nothing."

And so, regardless of danger and forgetful of all things save that the señorita was near me, I walked by her side. After all, we were but boy and girl, and I, at least, knew not nor thought of the gathering darkness.

I had made up my mind to go to Granada because I remembered that on the day when Mawgan and John Trenoweth took the Englishwomen away the name of this place had been mentioned. In truth, I had heard it even as my senses were departing from me and the earth seemed fading from my sight. It was little to go upon, but it was all we had. Well I knew that every Spanish port was guarded, and right sure was I that we should be hunted like foxes; but what then? What was the good of being an Englishman if I could not trust in God, and in His strength fight against odds? Even that night we had escaped, when all escape seemed impossible. In spite of the commands of the King and the anger of the Church I stood free in the city of Seville, while the woman I loved was by my side.

Even now as I write I can scarce repress a shudder at the perils which faced us; but then I knew no fear. Nay, though I walked with a naked sword in my hand, and expected every minute to be pounced upon by some emissary of Church and King, I could have laughed aloud. For the blood of youth surged in my veins, I breathed the air of liberty, and I trusted in the mercy of a loving God to whom my mother had taught me to pray from my earliest childhood.

She asked no questions, neither did she seem desirous of knowing the plans I made. Perchance her new-found liberty made her heedless of danger, even as it had made me fearless.

"We must get horses," I said presently.

"Yes," she replied, as though the thing presented no difficulty.

"I have no money," I said.

"Neither have I," she replied, and then I laughed aloud.

"You seem merry, señor."

"Aye, I am merry," I replied. "It is good to breathe the air of liberty."

"Do you imagine we shall not be followed?"

"Aye, we shall be followed; but presently we will get horses."

"How?"

"At present I know not; but we will. God will not mock us now."

"Do you believe in God?"

"Aye, I do."

"But you deny God, you mock the religion. How can a heretic expect God to help him?"

"Because he believes in a God of truth, and not of lies, señorita; because his God is not swayed by the caprices of priests and virgins and money-made saints."

At this she made no reply, but I thought I heard her praying. I noticed, too, that a change had come in her manner of speech. She was much more subdued and gentle, and yet it was easy to tell by the way she had looked at Tito, the tower-keeper, and by the light in her eyes when she had fastened his sword to her side, that the fires of her Southern blood burned in her veins.

We were now well out of the town, and were walking along a dusty track eastwards.

"God hath been very good," I said; "our escape has not yet been made known. Even when it is discovered they will not know which way to look."

Even as I spoke my heart gave a leap within me, for I heard the bell in the cathedral tower striking midnight.

"The soldiers will be at the Torres del Oro now," she said.

"Yes," I replied, and instinctively we quickened our speed. A minute or so later I turned and saw a bright light in the sky.

"Ah," she said, "'tis the signal!"

"What signal?"

"The fire is lit in the Torres del Oro. See the golden flames! It is always lit so when the city is aroused. That is one reason why it is called the tower of gold. The search for us will begin soon. Hearken, what is that?"

It was the sound of horse's hoofs.

"They are not coming after us, but towards us," I said.

"The fire summons the outlying guards," she replied.

We walked steadily on. She never speaking a word, I puzzling what we should do next, for now I began to realise our peril. Closer and closer came the sound of the horse's hoofs, and then as I saw a horseman only a few yards from us, the sound ceased. A moment later I heard another rider approaching us from another direction.

"Benito! Benito!" cried the man close by us.

"Ah, Enrique. You see the flame of fire. I come."

I did not hesitate a second; had I, perchance I should not have lived to tell my story. After all, we were as yet only man to man, and he did not see us. He was a little man, too, and would have been laughed at were we seen standing side by side. Therefore was my work easy, for I dragged

him from his horse as easily as if he were a boy, and by means of the Cornish wrestling trick which my father had learnt from Master John Carew, and which he had taught me, I threw the fellow with a tremendous thud on the ground. It was a somewhat cruel trick, for while it did not break the man's back, it went near to it; moreover, it stunned him so that I knew he would lie still an hour without knowing whether he was alive or dead.

"Take his horse, señorita," I said; "God hath sent us our chance."

Without a word she caught the bridle, and scarcely had she done so when the other came up.

"Where are you, Enrique? There is no time to waste, and possibly there may be booty. The flame burns not for nothing."

"Get off your horse, my little Spaniard," I said, "I need him."

"Get off my horse!" he said; "who are you?"

"For the present it matters not to you who I am, my little man," I replied; "the thing that matters is the loan of your horse."

"Drop the bridle, or you are a dead man," he said haughtily.

"I shall not drop the bridle, neither shall I be a dead man," I laughed. "Get off, I tell you; I am much pressed for time, and your friend Benito is far from well. In fact, I am afraid I have broken his back."

"Who are you?" he gasped.

"I am Señor Hamstead, the English heretic," I said.

With that he struck at me with his sword, but I evaded his blow easily, partly because his arm was entangled with his cloak, and partly because his horse moved.

"I am sorry to have to hurt you, my little señor," I said, as I dragged him from his horse, "but you will have it so," and then I struck him so heavily that he fell like a lump of lead.

"Ah, you have not killed him?"

"I do not think so, though I struck harder than I meant. Mount, señorita; look, the fire still burns."

A minute later we were on horseback galloping eastward.

What I have written may seem like boastfulness, yet have I written down only what took place. Besides, I had done nothing to boast of. It was by no good deeds of mine that I possessed a strength beyond the ordinary, or that I had so learned to use my strength that men said I could fell an ox at a blow. Possibly, had it been a matter of sword-play, the fellow might have proved my master (although, in

my pride, I doubt it much), but I knew that could I but get in one blow, we should have no further need to fear.

We rode, it may be an hour or more, as hard as we dared. For riding at night is no easy matter in Spain, especially if the sky is moonless. As I have said before, the roads be but tracks, which are full of pitfalls, and great deep pools of mud. Moreover, all around Seville the country is as flat as a table, so that when the rains have been heavy the water cannot run away so quickly as it can in a hilly country. I repeat, therefore, that we rode as hard as we dared; nevertheless, we went at no great speed, so that when we at length stopped for our horses to get breath, and I turned around, the flame of fire was still to be seen on the Torres del Oro; neither did it appear far away.

"The country is hilly towards Granada, I have heard," I remarked quietly, although of a truth my heart was anxious.

"Yes, it is," replied the señorita.

"We must get to the hilly country before daylight," I said. "Here the land is so flat and so treeless that we can easily be seen from afar; besides, our horses can be tracked. You are not weary, are you, señorita?"

"No, I am not weary."

After this we rode for some hours, and presently, when daylight began to appear, I saw that we were not far from the base of a great range of mountains.

"Look," I said, "once among those there will be a great difficulty in finding us. There ought to be shelter, too, in some of the great gorges. I have a shrewd suspicion, moreover, that there is food in the saddlebags. Possibly there may be also a bottle of wine."

She spoke not, but rode on, her eyes steadily fixed on the mountain range. Now that the day had dawned I could see her plainly, and then, in spite of her hatred towards me, I fell to feasting my eyes upon her. For she had thrown back the hood of old Tito's cloak, and thus revealed the wealth of her hair and the loveliness of her face, and although the stains of the gloomy tunnel we had passed were upon her, yet was she the most beauteous woman I had ever beheld, not even excepting my mother. As the sun rose higher, moreover, she seemed to throw off her gloom; her eyes sparkled again, while the blood mounted to her cheeks. Not that she in aught softened towards me, for although she ceased to wound me by cruel words, not one smile did she give me, neither did she say anything in kindness.

"It hath been a wondrous escape," I said as we entered a valley.

"The end is not yet."

"Nevertheless, it hath been wonderful," I said.

"I do not understand it," she said presently. "How did you escape those gaolers?"

"There is but little to be proud of in that," I said. "They had drunk much wine, and their tongues were unloosed. That was how I learnt from them that a tunnel ran from the dungeons to the river; aye, and learnt, too, that you were close by."

"But they looked strong men?" she said questioningly, but keeping her eyes away from me.

"For Spaniards they may be," I laughed, "but then they had been drinking. Moreover, I flattered their vanity, whereupon they became friendly, and greedily accepted the quart of wine which had been allowed to me. Then—well, it is easy to deal with drunken men, señorita. Besides, I am said to be strong of arm, and have learnt how to plant heavy blows."

"Then you did not kill them?"

"Nay; by this they will, I expect, be howling in order to get someone to let them out of their prison. Perchance, too, they will have framed a clumsy story in order to explain why they were so easily overcome."

"Could you not have escaped as we travelled from the Escurial to Seville?" she asked presently.

"Not with you," I replied.

After this we rode on in silence for some time, until we entered a curiously-shaped gorge. I saw at a glance that it offered shelter as well from rain as from the sun. Besides, grass grew around, and a clear stream of water trickled down its slopes. "We will dismount here," I said, for I saw that she looked tired and faint.

"No, let us go on."

"We will dismount," I repeated. "You need rest and food."

"I shall go on alone, then."

"No, you will not, mistress. You will have food, and then you will go to sleep. The horses, moreover, need it as well as you."

She looked at me angrily, as if she would defy me; but I think her weariness overcame her, for without another word she leapt from her horse.

"If there be no food in the saddlebags, what then, Señor Englishman?"

"I saw a hut yonder; I shall go and get bread from the peasants who live there."

"But you have no money."

"Nevertheless, I shall get it. But there is no need. Here is bread and wine."

I tethered the horses as well as I was able, then I went back to her side. I found her sitting on a stone and looking towards the opposite side of the gorge. I do not think she saw me, for she took no notice of my approach. Into her eyes had come the look I had noticed when I had commanded her to follow me into liberty.

"Is it hatred, or is it worse?" I asked myself. "She seems to fear nothing, and yet she is filled with dread. Why did she brave both the King and the Church in order to save my life, even while she confessed her hatred for me?"

"Señorita, eat," I said.

She looked at me as though she would read my soul, then without a word she took the food I offered her.

"Señorita," I said presently, "you see that peak yonder?"

"Yes."

"I am going to climb it," I said. "From there I shall be able to see if we are followed. You will not be afraid to remain here while I am gone?"

She looked around her like one filled with terror, and then she said, "No, I shall not be afraid."

"If we are not followed we shall spend most of the day here," I said. "You must rest. I will come back and sit by you while you sleep."

She shook her head as if in refusal.

"After you have slept you shall watch while I sleep," I said; "then we will ride towards Granada. By to-morrow at this time we should be there."

Without another word I climbed the peak towards which I had pointed, and looked eagerly around me. Away westward stretched the great broad plain across which we had travelled, but no sign of a horseman did I see. A great silence reigned. It might have been an uninhabited land, save for a few peasants' huts which were perhaps a league away. Having thus assured myself, I came down again, and I saw that she was anxious to know whether we had aught to fear.

"All is well, señorita; you may sleep," I said.

Thereupon I rolled up my cape for a pillow, and walked to a spot from which I could look down the gorge towards Seville. When I came back again she was fast asleep.

Thus we spent the morning, she sleeping and I watching.

CHAPTER XXXII

HOW THE SPANISH MAID CHALLENGED PABLO TOLEDO

I HAD passed through some strange experiences while I had been in Spain, but it seemed to me then, even as it seems to me now, that this morning was more to be remembered than any other. Not that aught happened as men call happening. As far as I can remember no sound reached me save the scream of an eagle, or the cry of a buzzard. Not a breath of wind stirred, not a blade of grass moved. The April sun beat down upon the great tawny rocks which everywhere abounded, and had I not cast my eyes towards the horses (which, having satisfied their hunger with the rank grass which grew on the spot where I had tethered them, stood perfectly still), and the sleeping form of the Spanish maid, I might have fancied that I was utterly alone. I cannot say that I feared aught, and yet a nameless dread possessed me.

In spite of our marvellous escape, I knew that we were in danger. Even although the King might cease to trouble concerning us, I knew that Father Parsons and Pablo Toledo would spare no effort to find us. Although the señorita had told me nothing of what had taken place while I had been imprisoned at Seville, I knew that Pablo had not given up hopes of winning her as his wife. I knew, moreover, that the account which Father Parsons had given to the King concerning the scene in El Cristo de la Vega was intended to shield her from danger, and yet to obtain power over her. Therefore, it was not to be believed that she would be allowed to escape without a struggle. The Church, moreover, was bitter against heretics, especially against English heretics. Again and again had I been told of their sufferings, for the Spanish Churchman knew not the meaning of mercy. Inoffensive English sailors had been torn limb from limb; their bodies had been tortured with burning irons; their eyeballs had been plucked from their sockets; while every other outrage that furious ecclesiastics could invent had been heaped upon them. It was not likely, then, that I who had defied them, and who had again and again thwarted their purposes, would be allowed to go free, especially when I had dared to take the Spanish maiden with me. Even as I sat there I reflected that Pablo

Toledo and his followers might be near. When such thoughts as these possessed me I would start up frantically and rush towards the horses, only to remind myself that the part of the gorge in which we were was curiously fashioned for a hiding-place, and that I should place the señorita in far greater danger by riding away in broad daylight.

Not once, but a hundred times, did I cast my eyes to the spot where the woman I loved lay fast asleep. Sometimes as I watched her my heart grew warm and tender. I reflected that again and again she had saved my life, and that it was through her that Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth had been enabled to escape with the English-women. Moreover, as I remembered now, when I stood before the King she had come forward and declared that she, and not I, was guilty of sacrilege, and this only with the purpose of saving my life. I could have shouted for joy. But, again, as I remembered her words of scorn and hatred my anger grew hot, and I vowed that I would return scorn for scorn, and wound her even as she had wounded me.

But I would save her! I would take her to England! That I vowed. How I knew not, yet was this resolution fixed in my heart. Not that I expected her ever to love me, for although I had boasted to her that I would win her love I knew that the heart of such a woman as she would ever remain defiant. Sometimes, in truth, I desired not her love, so full of rage was my heart, yet did I long to conquer her, to bend her will to mine.

Often did I think of Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth, even as I had thought of them during the long months we had been separated. Had they ever thought of me, I wondered? Yes, they had, for we had vowed when first we saw the Spanish mountains that one should never be left in prison without the others seeking to set him free. But they had done nothing. And yet how did I know? Probably even then they were thinking and acting for me. Had they gone to Granada, I wondered? Was the word I had heard but the will-o'-the-wisp of the imagination, or had they for my guidance?

And so the hours passed, while the sun climbed the heavens, and made even the desolate gorge in which I sat a very paradise of beauty.

I have sometimes thought that this one morning changed me from a boy into a man, for the thoughts that filled my mind came not to me as I was in prison. And especially is this true of one thing which happened to me, and which I can find no words to describe, even as words always fail to tell of one's deepest feelings. It came about

in this wise : I had been sitting long, thinking of these and other things, when I fell to musing concerning the religion of Spain, and of the ghastly deeds done in the name of Him Who took the little children in His arms. I remembered, too, the words Padre Sanchez had said to me when trying to cure me of what he called heresy, and as I remembered, a great unbelief came into my heart.

" After all," I said, " there can be no God, or if there be, He is a great Being who careth not for the sons of men. Half the wars, and half the cruelty of the world, have been caused by religion. That which I have done, I have done without God, even as what I shall do in the future will be done without Him."

As this thought passed through my mind I seemed to feel a presence near me, and looking towards the sky it seemed to me as though I saw an angel's form with a face like my mother's. Then I heard one word, and only one. It reached me not, as I thought, through the ears, neither was it spoken by a human voice. Rather the whole of the valley was filled with it, even although a man might be by my side and never hear it at all. And the word was GOD, though it belonged to no human language, and was spoken rather to the soul than to the mind. As I heard it my fears and my doubts passed away, even as a summer vapour passes away when the sun rises in its strength, and my heart became light with joy. After that there was a great silence again, so great that it seemed to make a noise.

" Señor Hamstead."

I turned and saw the woman I loved standing by my side.

" It is your turn to sleep and mine to watch," she said.

" You are refreshed, señorita ? "

" Yes, I am refreshed and rested."

" It is noon-day," I went on. " There are bread and wine left from our morning meal, señorita. We will eat and drink. After that you shall watch, and I will sleep."

Then we sat down to eat, and neither of us spoke a word during our meal, for she still regarded me with hauteur, while my mind was full of what seemed to me a vision from on high.

" You will not be afraid while I am asleep ? "

" No."

" And you will awake me at the least sound ? "

" Yes—but——"

" But what ? "

" How do you know I shall not leave you while you are asleep ? "

"I shall not keep you if you desire to go," I replied quietly. "Nevertheless, you will not go."

"Why?" she asked angrily.

"Because you dare not go away without me," and in spite of myself I spoke mockingly.

"If Pablo Toledo were to come?" she cried.

"Aye," I said, "if he were to come, what then?"

"I could go away with him. I could still be safe—if I would consent to be his wife. He would explain to the King—all—that is, all that hath taken place."

"But you will not," I replied.

"I hate you! Oh, how I hate you!"

"But you would not go away with Pablo Toledo!"

"I would, I would," she cried, her eyes ablaze. "Oh, I have obeyed you because of your kindness to my mother; but only because of that. At least Pablo Toledo is a Spaniard, and a brave man."

"But you would not go with him," I repeated quietly. "Even although he were to come here while I was asleep, and were to beseech you to fly with him, you would still stay by my side. Nay, you would wake me and ask me to protect you from him."

To this she made no answer, but I knew by the trembling of her lips that she had well-nigh lost control over herself.

"And to prove that I believe in what I say," I went on, "I shall go to sleep in peace, señorita," and thereupon, without another word, I threw myself on the ground, and closed my eyes.

I must have been very tired, for I lost consciousness almost immediately. Perhaps the perfect silence and the warm, balmy air were favourable to this, for I did not expect, even when I boasted of my peace of mind to the señorita, that sleep would come to me. Yet so it was, although my sleep was troubled. I dreamed that I could see the señorita's heart, and that it was full of hatred towards me. Nay, more than hatred, for I fancied that she had murderous intents concerning me. I thought we were away together in a far country, and that while I was busy planning for her welfare, she came towards me with a knife in her hand, and vowed to kill me.

"You said I would not dare to go away without you," I heard her say. "I tell you I would rather die than go with you."

With that she lifted her hand to strike me, while I struggled to defend myself. But this I could not do, for a great weight seemed to rest upon me; nevertheless, in my attempts to free myself from her, I thought the whole

heavens were filled with fire, whereupon she became powerless. After that I fancied myself in England. I thought I was lying alone in my father's park, beneath one of the great oaks. While I lay there I thought I saw the señorita and Pablo Toledo walking together towards me.

"You say I love him, and hate you," I heard her say. "I will show you that I hate him. See, this is the knife he gave me when we were in the dungeon together. With this I will kill him, and then I will fly with you whither you will."

At this Pablo Toledo laughed.

"You are no Spaniard; you are afraid to do this," he said.

Whereupon I thought she came towards me with the glittering knife in her hand, while I struggled in vain to rise and defend myself.

"Now you will know what it is to defy a Spanish soldier, Señor Hamstead," I thought I heard Pablo Toledo say with a laugh; "now you will see how a Spanish maiden regards an English clown."

I tried to cry out, but in vain. Then I thought she fastened her black, gleaming eyes on mine, while she bade me feel the sharpness of the knife.

"Ah," I thought, "I wear a steel corslet——" then—

"Señor, señor! Awake!"

I leapt to my feet, and saw the señorita by my side.

"We are attacked!" she cried.

Then my heart grew almost cold, for standing close by me was Pablo Toledo and half-a-dozen Spanish soldiers.

"Good day, Señor Hamstead," he said mockingly.

I grasped my sword-hilt tightly, and looked eagerly around.

"Oh, there is no chance for you to escape," he said, with a mocking laugh. "Did you think I was a bungling fool like yourself? The señorita thought we should enter this vile place by the road you took. That is not a Spanish soldier's way. Some peasants saw you come here, and so I crept here quietly by another way, and on foot. That was why I came on you so suddenly."

During this speech I was able to recover my senses. I saw at a glance that the señorita had not connived at this sudden coming. She was evidently as much angered as I.

"Will you be pleased to hand me that sword?" he continued.

"And then?" I asked.

"We will go quietly back to Seville."

"Guarded by six soldiers."

"Aye, by these six soldiers."

I shrugged my shoulders in the fashion I had seen the Spaniards shrug theirs, and although little of mirth was in my heart I laughed aloud.

"Why do you laugh, señor?"

"I was thinking what a coward you are," I replied.

"Coward!"

"Aye, coward. You have promised that we should meet sword to sword, but you have six soldiers—you are afraid!"

"I afraid! Man, I long to send you to hell. But there, this honour is not for such as you. In a duel none but gentlemen must fall by Pablo Toledo's sword."

"Just like a Spaniard," I replied. "He makes a promise, and then—his little heart fails," and even while I laughed I saw the blood mount to his face.

"My commands are to bring you back alive," he said, biting his lips.

"But such a swordsman!" I mocked, "such a swordsman! If you wound me, disarm me, have you not six soldiers? While I—but there, a coward is always a coward."

"You shall die for that!" he cried savagely.

"Aye, boast! You Spaniards cannot kill like soldiers. With you it is the rack, the torture chamber, the fire! But the sword—ah, the glory of being a Spaniard!"

Even yet he held himself under control, neither do I believe I should have taunted him into a fight, but for the señorita.

"You ask the señorita to be your wife," I went on, "as though a woman who hath English blood in her veins could wed a man who with six soldiers at his back is still afraid to fight. Tah!"

At this the señorita laughed also, for she saw what was in my mind.

I saw his eyes rest upon her, and then I knew that I wounded him more deeply.

"If by fighting you I could win the señorita's consent to be my wife, I would e'en forget my pride, and grant you your request." This he said in English.

"Then fight, Señor Capitan," she cried, "and I will promise that if you kill him, I will marry no man save you."

"And if I will not?" he said.

"I would rather die the worst death that man can invent than marry a coward!" she replied.

At this his passion overcame him, and he commanded

his soldiers to stand back. Then my heart beat high with joy, for I felt that all hope was not gone.

"Mine is but a poor gaoler's sword," I said, "while you carry my father's—still——" and then I laughed again, for though I knew my life was not worth a groat's purchase, seeing he had six soldiers at his back, the joy of battle made me heedless of danger.

"Aye, and you shall die by your own father's sword," he said, making it whistle around his head.

Even then I could not help looking at the señorita, and when I saw that she held behind her back the dagger I had given her, I could not help wondering at the strangeness of a woman's heart.

Upon that we fell to fighting, and we had not exchanged half-a-dozen passes before I was fully aware that I was face to face, not with a tyro, but a skilful swordsman. I saw, too, by the look in his eyes that he was no coward, but, like many another Spanish soldier, found much of his joy in the clash of arms. Moreover, the sword with which he fought was better than mine, although I had naught to complain of in the blade I had taken from the gaoler.

On the whole he was a better swordsman than I. He knew more tricks, and was, as I have been told, a great fighter of duels; but then I was not a novice at the game, and the stake for which I played was not a light one. Even as I fought I reflected that could I once despatch Toledo I should find means of dealing with the soldiers. For although they were wild, cruel-looking men, they were still common soldiers, and could perhaps be outwitted. Besides, the señorita was not a helpless child, and side by side we could, I was sure, find means of getting our liberty. So I assumed a wary attitude, until I felt the quality of his wrists, and gauged the danger of his arm.

"Ah," I said presently with a laugh, "I knew not that I should have a boy to fight with. Be all the Spanish capitans of your quality, Señor Toledo?"

To this he gave no reply but a snarl, whereupon I prepared to carry out the plan I had conceived.

"*Couragio*, señorita," I said to assure her, and then I fell back from before his attack. Not rapidly, but inch by inch, just as a weak swordsman yields before his master. This, I saw, gave him confidence, whereupon I gave him the chance he had hoped for, but which I was also fully prepared to take advantage of. Thus, when he made his lunge, I made the stroke I had been planning for, and in a moment his sword went spinning into the air, while he fell before the thrust I gave him.

I had not killed him, but the thrust was so severe that I knew he would not be able to fight again, whereupon, with the heat of battle upon me, I turned towards the soldiers.

Never until then did I realise what one strong, desperate man can do. Fired with a desire for freedom, I made a circle of steel around me, so that for well nigh a minute I held them at bay, and even when they leapt upon me I threw them from me again and again, and more than one, as I believed, shared the fate of their captain.

But I saw this could not be for long. Strong and desperate as I was, I knew that I must at length be taken, for one man cannot fight many for any length of time and still be conqueror. Still, the passion that filled me was so strong, and the stake for which I played was so high, that I fought like a madman, and then the soldiers became more wary, and attacked me with more caution. To my dismay I saw this, for while I was able to defend myself against the two who faced me, I saw one coming towards me at my left side with his dagger uplifted.

"All is lost now," I thought; and then I heard a scream.

"They have struck the señorita!" was the fear that filled my heart, and with that I could not help casting my eyes towards her. Then I saw the mistake I had made, for instead of what I had feared, I saw that she had driven the dagger into the man who had tried to encompass my death.

But this led to my own undoing, as I will instantly tell, for the moment I ceased to regard the soldiers gave them an advantage over me, and before I was able to take my eyes from her, I felt a blow on my head which made me see a thousand fires, and caused a roar in my ears like the roar of a stormy sea.

"God save her!" I prayed, and then a great blackness came over me.

CHAPTER XXXIII

HOW WE ALL MET AGAIN

WHEN I opened my eyes, it was to see the señorita bending over me, while near me stood Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth.

"Rupert, get up, my boy," I heard Mawgan say. "You are not a dead man yet."

"Mawgan," I said, my head swimming, and my eyes all dim, "what means this?"

"We have taken the Señor Capitan prisoner, my friend," cried Mawgan. "As for the soldiers, no sooner did they hear my shout than they ran like the cowards they are. You are all right; it was a nasty blow the fellow gave you, but your head is unbroken."

"Aye," said John Trenoweth, "the Lord turned his blade aside, and saved His own."

"Señorita, you are not harmed?"

"No, señor."

"Not a hair of her head hath been touched," said John Trenoweth.

"But how came you here?" I asked, still unable to grasp the situation.

"What would you?" asked Mawgan. "Do you think we have never thought of you since the day we parted? Did you hear me shout the word Granada that day we escaped from the Capitan Toledo?"

"Aye," I replied, "I remember that."

"That was the word the maid Inez told me to cry," he said, and I thought there was peculiar tenderness in his voice.

"And did you go to Granada?" I asked.

"Aye, that we did," he replied; "and ever since that time Mistress de Valencia and Esther Truscott have been living with the gipsies there."

"And they are safe?" I asked.

"Aye, safe and well. You shall see them soon, and, in truth, the sight of them will cheer your heart, for they look ten years younger than on the day we saw them at the Circo Romano. But we did not forget you, Rupert. As soon as the gipsies thought it safe, two of them started out to find

you, and after much wary questioning they found that you had been taken to Seville, and put into prison there. Whereupon, the English ladies being safe at Granada among the gipsies, we went to Seville in the hopes of rescuing you. We heard of what happened when you were brought before the King; for, as you see, we have both clothed ourselves in gipsy fashion, and thus passed to and fro in the streets of Seville without harm happening to us. Well, we were sore put to it when we heard you were to be cast into a dungeon under the Alcazar, in order to be kept safe until your burning, which was to take place to-day, for we knew not what to do. John Trenoweth here kept on telling me to be of good cheer, for God would surely preserve you; nevertheless, I was sore troubled. While you were awaiting the King's return we did not fear so much, for we heard you were well cared for, and stood in need of nothing; but when we were told that you were committed to the dungeon, and that your death was determined upon, I well-nigh lost my senses. Not that we meant to let you die. We would have rescued you in some fashion or another, never fear, but how I could not tell. Well, when we heard the King's will concerning you, we set to planning as to what could be done. The gipsies who were with us presently got hold of the two turnkeys who were to be the night guards of your prison, and plied them with plenty of wine."

"Ah!" I cried, for my mind was getting clearer now. "It was you who made them drunk?"

"Aye, that it was, and we bribed them to take wine to you, likewise. Moreover, we knew that if you had a chance you would make good use of it. So we worked it out in this way. We had arranged with them to come back to us for a night of drinking after they had given you your supper. This done, we intended getting their keys, dressing ourselves in their clothes, and by this means going to you and giving you your liberty. But this plan was, we knew, full of danger, and I was not sure we should be successful."

"But they did not go back," I said.

"Nay, and we had reckoned on that. We said among ourselves, 'If they do not come back, it will mean that Rupert hath seen their condition, and hath taken advantage of it.'

"So we waited in the Cathedral Square, over against the Alcazar, until a late hour, and when they did not return we felt sure that something was astir. When we saw the fire gleam on the Torres del Oro we were sure you had escaped. And this we soon found was the case, for on

going thither we heard a great hullabaloo. Search parties were formed and sent out in all directions, while orders were given to bring you and the señorita back, dead or alive, but alive if possible, for the holy fathers love a burning.

"Well, among the search parties was one headed by the Señor Capitan Pablo Toledo, and while some of the gipsies arranged to follow the other leaders, John Trenoweth and I determined to keep near the Señor Capitan, especially when we heard him say he would take the road towards Granada. Not having horses, we had great difficulty in keeping him in sight, without ourselves attracting his attention. When we got to Bobadilla, however, we came across a party of gipsies, from whom we got horses, and then, while not overtaking him, we followed his movements."

"And have you come alone—you and John Trenoweth?"

"Nay, the brother of Inez and two other gipsies kept with us, and gave us much valuable advice. In truth, but for them, I much doubt if we should have found you."

"And where are they now?"

"They are with the Señor Capitan," laughed Mawgan gaily. "And Rupert, the night draws on. Had we not better be making our way towards Granada without more ado?"

"And my mother? Is she well?" asked the señorita, who had been listening eagerly all the while.

"Aye, that she is," replied Mawgan, "and when she sees you her happiness will be well-nigh complete."

"Doth she know, doth she understand?" she asked eagerly.

"Aye, she knoweth that all the time you were seemingly playing into the hands of her enemies you were thinking how to save her," said Mawgan quietly.

"And now we must settle with the Señor Capitan," continued the young Cornishman, and the two walked away, leaving me with the Spanish maid.

"Señorita," I said earnestly, "you saved my life a little while ago."

"The man is not dead!" she said; "thank God he is not dead!"

"But I should have been but for you!" I made answer.

She lifted her eyes to mine for a moment, then she let them fall again.

"Let us go to my mother," she said.

I much longed to taunt her with not having escaped with Pablo Toledo, but as I looked at her my heart grew tender, and the words were not spoken.

When we reached the spot where Pablo Toledo had fallen, we found that the gipsies had bound up his wound, and that he was able to talk, although with difficulty.

"Curse you!" he said to me as I came up.

"What would you, Señor Capitan?" I answered lightly.

"The end is not yet," he said. "The Great Armada will sail, and then when your little island is in our power I will have my revenge."

At this I laughed, for although I well-nigh pitied him, I could not but rejoice to see him in this plight.

"What will you do with me?" he asked presently.

The gipsies looked towards me as if for direction.

"If you say he is to live, excellency," said the brother of Inez, "he shall live. The wound is deep, but I have applied some of the balsam known only to *los gitanos*, and it never fails. Moreover, one hour from here are some of my people; they will at my word care for him until he is strong again. But if your excellency commands his death, he shall die even now, and before your eyes."

An hour before I would have said "Kill him," but now I could not. Like me, he loved the señorita; besides, we had fought together, and I could not command that he be killed.

"Let him live," I said, "but guard him safely for three months, and then let him do his will."

He gave me a look of astonishment, which was followed by an expression of contempt.

"Tah!" he said scornfully.

"An Englishman is not a Spaniard," I said to him. "He cannot command an enemy to be killed in cold blood, when he hath fought with him and conquered him! Besides," and I held the blade before him, "I have my father's sword again."

"We shall meet again, Señor Englishman," he said loftily, although I saw that even to speak gave him pain. "We shall meet again, where I know not, when I know not. But the time will come, and the señorita will be mine; I, Don Señor Pablo Toledo, have said it," and then he closed his eyes.

Of our journey to Granada I shall say but little, for of a truth naught happened worth relating. I remember that we passed through a wild, rocky country, in the which had I been alone I should surely have lost my way. The gipsies, however, seemed to know every track, and every ravine. Every river, moreover, they knew from source to mouth, and although some of them were swollen with the recent rains, we forded them in safety.

Near me rode the señorita, but she spoke no word to me. Her eyes seemed always turned away from me, as though my presence was distasteful to her. All through the night we rode, and then, when morning came, we dismounted, and spent the day at the base of a snow-capped mountain, not many miles from Granada.

When night came on again I drew near to her.

"In three hours from now we shall see your mother," I said.

"Do you believe that I was unmindful of her during those days—in—in Toledo?"

"No, señorita."

"Do you believe, although I asked you to write a letter to—to—Sir John Tremayne, that had you heeded me, aye, and had Sir John yielded to the request which was to have been made therein, that one groat of his money would have fallen into the hands of Father Parsons or Señor Toledo?"

For a moment I was silent.

"Do you, Señor Hamstead?"

As she spoke I looked into her eyes.

"No, señorita."

"But you did believe it?"

"Aye, I did."

"Why?"

"Because you are a Papist, and to a Papist the commands of the Church are more than mother or friends."

"And yet you trust me now?"

"Aye, I trust you now."

"Why?"

"Because I love you."

"Cease to love me, señor. Cease to love me."

"Why, señorita?"

"Because I wish you well. I wish you happiness, although my heart is full of anger and bitterness towards you. You are English, you are a heretic, but you are still a brave man. If I have saved your life, you have also saved mine. I ask your forgiveness for calling you a coward and a fool. Do you forgive me?"

"That is nothing," I laughed lightly. "A man easily forgives the angry words of a woman he loves."

"But you must not love me. You scorned me once, hated me once. Scorn me again, hate me again!"

"I cannot, señorita."

"You must; listen: If I live, if I escape the anger of the Church, one of two things will happen to me."

"And they?" I asked.

"One is, that I must wed Pablo Toledo."

"Do you love him?"

"Love him!" That was the only answer she gave me, but I knew by the look in her eyes that the very thought of him was loathsome to her.

"And the other, señorita?" I said gaily, for Pablo Toledo troubled me not one whit.

"The other is that I must go into a convent—into religion."

"Why?" I asked.

"Why!" she repeated as if in astonishment; "because I must atone."

"Atone for what!"

"For what?" she asked passionately. "For what? Need you ask, señor. Am I not the daughter of Don Fernandio Basilio de Valencia? Am I not the child of the Church? Have I no soul to save?"

"You are also the child of the daughter of Sir John Tremayne," I said, "and although you are a child of the Church you love it not. You hate its impurity, its cruelty, its lies. You have seen its trickery, you know its hollowness, its shams!"

"Silence!" she cried passionately. "Have I not sinned enough without listening to this?"

"It is not a sin," I replied. "All that you have done hath been prompted by honour, and a love for right. What sin can there be in seeking to save your mother—or, for that matter, those who tried to befriend her—from those who have no honour, no conscience, no compassion? What is the history of this Spain, but cruelty, inhumanity, devilry? Every day the Church in which the Spaniard believes outrages the very name of religion, and is in truth a vile libel on Him whom they profess to follow."

She looked towards me, and in her eyes I saw fear as well as passion.

"Even now, in order to see your mother, you have had to flee the priests and their minions," I went on. "I say it without doubt, that had we not come thither, both your mother and her serving woman would have been tortured and burnt, just as the Spaniard hath tortured and burnt in the Netherlands, in Mexico, and in Peru, as well as in his own country. Aye, for that matter," and now I forgot all things save my anger, "have not the Papists everywhere acted as devils act rather than as men? Why, my own mother was even dragged from the faggot in my own country when Mary was Philip's wife, and reigned there; while hundreds of others suffered unnameable tortures. Besides, do you think we have forgotten what happened in

France barely fifteen years ago, at the Massacre of St. Bartholomew? I was but a boy at the time, and yet I remember how our country was filled with horror as we heard of it. Fancy, scores of thousands of men, women, and helpless children murdered in the name of your religion, while your Pope caused the Te Deum to be sung in memory of a deed, thankfulness for which should only be chanted in hell. Is it a wonder, then, that we sought to save your mother, who is an Englishwoman and of the Reformed faith? Is it a wonder that we love not the Spaniard, whose name is but a synonym for cruelty and devilry?"

She listened in silence all the time I spoke, and then she walked away from me.

"Our horses are ready, señor," she said, "and I cannot answer you as I would. Remember, the daughter of a Spanish nobleman hath pride."

At this I was much angered, but I spoke no word in answer; nevertheless, I rejoiced that I had told her what was in my heart.

Three hours later I saw the town of Granada standing upon the hill, but we did not enter its streets; rather we kept along the valley which lies at its base, until we came at length to a curious place, the like of which I had never seen before. In truth, what I saw was nothing more nor less than a city dug out of the hillside. It is true I did not, that night, realise the fact in its fullness, but when morning came I discovered that the whole countryside was honeycombed with holes and tunnels, and in these places the gipsies lived like rabbits in a warren. That night, however, we saw nothing of the gipsy community save swiftly gliding figures, and now and then twinkling lights which were carried from place to place with great speed. Instead, we were led far up the hillside, until we came to what seemed like one of those holes dug out of the ground which I have since seen dug by the Cornish miners.

"Enter, señorita; enter, señor," said the brother of Inez.

And this we did without fear, for we knew that the gipsies were our friends. Moreover, Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth were with us. We went for some distance along a dark tunnel, not unlike that through which the señorita and I had passed in Seville, until we came to an open space where many lights burned.

For an instant I looked around me like one dazed, for truly the place was strange past the telling. As far as I could judge, we were in the heart of the mountain, while all

around us were strangely clad figures, whose eyes gleamed brightly as they watched our approach. I looked around eagerly for some familiar face, but not one did I see. Two of my companions, however, had sharper eyes than I, for scarcely had we entered than I heard two cries. The one came from the señorita. "Mother!" she said, and I saw her rush towards one of the women, and a moment later was locked in her arms. The other who gave the cry was John Trenoweth, who called his sweetheart by name, and rushed swiftly to her side.

"Excellency," said a voice, "you must be aweary and hungry. Look, such fare as we have is yours."

I looked and saw Inez, who was arrayed in similar garments to those she wore on the night in the northern mountains when she danced with Mawgan Killigrew.

But although she spoke kindly to me, I saw that she had eyes for none save Mawgan Killigrew. As I became used to the light, I saw that she watched him as a faithful dog might watch his master, and then I knew that what I had believed many months before was true. Moreover, there was not only love in her eyes, but jealousy, for whenever she looked towards the Señorita de Valencia they became vindictive and cruel.

"You found them, my lord?" she said to Mawgan after we had supped, and the señorita and her mother had left us.

"Aye, Inez, we found them," replied Mawgan with a laugh, and he told her of our adventures.

"And now what will you do?" she asked. "You have gained that for which you came to Spain. You have rescued not only the mother, but the daughter; what will you now?"

"Nay, I rescued not the daughter," cried Mawgan. "It is Señor Rupert who hath done that."

She took no notice of his correction, save to look towards me with indifferent contempt, and then she repeated her question.

"What will you now, my lord?"

"We shall all go back to England, I trust," replied the young Cornishman.

"And then, my lord?"

"Then; why, that is all, Inez," said Mawgan; "except that Rupert and I will fight the Spanish soldiers should they seek a landing on our shores."

"But what will become of the English maid?"

"Aye, I know not," replied Mawgan with a laugh. "Perchance, she will marry an English lord."

"What English lord?"

"Aye, that I know not," replied Mawgan.

"And how long will you seek to stay here?" asked the gipsy maid, and I saw that her eyes had become softer and more tender.

"Not long," replied Mawgan. "Now that Rupert is with us again, and we have the señora's daughter with us, means will soon be found of getting away. You see, Señor Rupert hath been our leader, and is much cleverer than we."

Again she looked at me with a kind of indulgent scorn, but spoke no word in answer.

"Are we safe here, Inez?" I asked. "If the Spanish soldiers were to come, could they not find us, and capture us?"

"Did they capture you on the northern mountains?" she asked. "How much less can they capture you here?"

"But the way by which we came seemed easy to find," I interposed.

"The way by which you came!" she said scornfully; "but think you that *los gitanos* have not many ways? Did not the soldiers come hither to find my lord and his servant, and the English señoras? But did they find them? Aye, they searched our dwelling-places, and went away satisfied that my lord and the others were not here. But think you we tell our secrets to the world? Here we are in our own domain, and although men searched for those whom we would hide from one harvest-time to another, yet would they not find them."

After this I felt more safe, and feeling much wearied by the experiences through which I had gone, I asked that I might be allowed to sleep.

"Not yet, if it please you, my master," said John Trenoweth; "there be many things of which we must speak this night," and I knew, by the look in his eyes, that I had better yield to him.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE LOVE OF A GIPSY MAID

"WHAT are these matters, John Trenoweth?" I asked, as soon as we three were alone together.

"This," said John Trenoweth: "The Great Armada is in the mouth of the Tagus, and ready to sail."

"How know you?" I asked, for I had heard that it was not to leave until August.

"The Lord hath been good to us," replied the Cornishman. "Again and again He hath delivered us out of the lion's mouth. Think of it, my masters, think of it, and let us rejoice."

"Aye, we do rejoice," I replied; "but how know you that the Great Armada is in Lisbon Harbour? It is true I learned but little while in Seville, but a gaoler told me that owing to the illness of Don Alonza de Guzman, Duke of Medina Sidonia, it would not sail until August."

"Aye, so it hath been diligently reported," replied the Cornishman, "for we heard the same news at Seville; but there hath been brought to the gipsy camp this night one who knows."

"Who?" I asked.

"He to whom we owe our liberty, if I am not mistaken," said John; "the young priest who visited us in Toledo, he whom the señorita prevailed upon to obtain clemency for my dear Esther's mistress, and who brought a letter from the King on the day of the burning at Toledo. Aye, and he who caused the arm of the wooden image to be raised in the Papist church where we were judged."

"Padre Iago Alicante!" I cried; "is he here?"

"Aye, he is here. He followed us from Seville."

"It is strange we should not have seen him," I said.

"He was afraid," replied the Cornishman; "in truth, the man is well-nigh bereft of his senses, seeing he is a priest, and an honest man at the same time. Well, scarcely had we reached this hill, than he came to the brother of the maid Inez, and asked that he might see the señorita. This the gipsy refused; then he asked that he might see Master Killigrew or Master Hamstead. Again the gipsy refused, or he said you were all at supper, and might not be

disturbed by a begging friar. At this he pleaded so har
that the gipsy at last consented for him to see me."

"And have you seen him?"

"Aye, I have seen him."

"And why did he tell you of the sailing of the Grea
Armada?"

"Because he desires to see you and the señorita.
fancy he thought that, as the bearer of such news, yo
would give him a hearing."

"And where is he now?"

"He is in one of the many caves with which this mou
tain is honeycombed."

"Shall we see him, Mawgan?"

"Aye," replied the young Cornishman, who had bee
listening, I thought, absently. "Say, Rupert, do not a
these things mean that we must now seek means to retur
to England, and with all speed?"

"That they do," replied Trenoweth. "It is true w
have been safe and well treated here, but we be living lik
rabbits instead of men, and although they have been s
kind I love not these gipsies."

"But for them we had not been alive by this," replie
Mawgan sharply; "think well of that, John Trenoweth.

"Aye, I have thought of it," replied the Cornishma
"but I long to take my dear maid to a Christian land, an
to marry her in a Christian church. And I do long to tak
her dear mistress back to her father."

"Aye, and I believe you would have tried to go, leavin
Rupert and the señorita here in Spain, had we all bee
willing," said Mawgan, a little angrily, I thought.

"As to that, Master Mawgan," said John Trenoweth
"I do not deny that my heart is fair sore for the sight of
Christian land. I want to hear a Christian tongue, and ea
Christian meat; but I say it plainly though you be m
master, that you do tell a lie when you say that I would g
home without Master Rupert. I do not say anything abou
the Spanish maid, for I believed that she was willing to se
her own mother for the sake of the lying Jesuits; but
this I was mistaken, and I take leave to ask her pardo
All the same, I like not these gipsies, and now I say it
time for us to plan how to get back home."

"The gipsies have been good to you," retorted Mawgan

"Aye, Master Mawgan, in their own godless way the
have, and that is one reason why I do wish to get back, f
I have not lived with closed eyes."

"What do you mean?" asked Mawgan.

"I do mean that the black-eyed maid called Inez

dangerous," replied John ; " I do mean that she hath been good to us because of her fancy for you, and, what is more, you have begun to make a fool of yourself, Master Mawgan."

I saw the blood mount to the young Cornishman's face, and so, to bring the conversation back to the business in hand, I asked John Trenoweth to bring the young priest to us.

A few minutes later we stood face to face with Iago Alicante, and as I looked at him my heart was moved with a great pity. He was worn almost to skin and bone, and so much had his mind been wrought upon that he seemed well-nigh out of his senses.

" God bless you, Ruperto Hamstead, for letting me speak to you," he said ; " but hath the Lord softened your heart towards the Church ? "

" Do you think my heart can soften, knowing what I do ? " I asked.

" I cannot understand it," he said, like one musing. " I cannot understand it. For many months you have borne a charmed life ; even when the anger of the Church hath been aroused you have—— But who am I that I should question these things ? God grant that He may not allow you to suffer the greater damnation because of this. Oh, señor, is it not better to suffer the flames here than eternal flames in hell ? "

" You are over-wrought, Padre," I said, " and I care not to talk with you concerning these things. You told our friend here that you knew many things concerning the Great Armada."

" Nay, I know nothing, save that it is to sail without delay, perhaps in two days, perhaps in twenty. This I know, because directly after the King passed judgment on you three days ago Father Parsons and Father Sanchez started for Lisbon that they might meet the rest of the Holy Fathers in the Iglesia Major."

" Why desire they this ? " I asked.

" Because the Armada is going to England in a holy cause," answered the young priest ; " because their work is like unto that of the Crusaders of olden time. Therefore the Standard is to be blessed by Holy Church, and afterwards committed to the charge of the well-beloved Don Alonzo de Guzman El Bueno, while every galleon is to be made not only a ship of war, but a temple of the Church. Would to God I were worthy to take my place with the rest, and in the day of battle perform the rites of the Church to the wounded and the dying."

"And are you not worthy?" I asked.

"Worthy!" he cried. "I who am now a fugitive from the Church's righteous anger, I who have been a Judas to my calling? But what can I do, what can I do?"

There was such madness in his eyes, and such agony in his voice, that no man, however hard-hearted he was, could help pitying him.

"Señor Hamstead," he continued, "can I speak to you alone? I have that to say which is only for your ears. Ah, *Madre de Dios*, forgive me!"

When we were alone together, I thought he seemed more calm and collected; nevertheless, the same tone of agony was in his voice, while his whole body trembled like fallen leaves in autumn time.

"Brother Ruperto," he said, "ought I, think you, to see the Señorita de Valencia again, to look into her eyes once more before the darkness falls on me?"

"Why may you not?" I asked, for I understood not what was in his mind.

"Ah! you do not know. I am a priest, Brother Ruperto; I have taken my vows. And yet I love her—ah, God, how I love her! Not that I have spoken of it to her—I have not sunk so low as that. But I worship the ground she walks upon, I live only in the light of her eyes. Because of that I have been her slave, because of that I have done her will, even when it hath been sin—blasphemy, sacrilege! I, a priest of God, knew that she sought to outwit the Jesuits, and save her mother; and yet I aided her. I was the man who brought the King's message on the day when the English serving woman was to have been burned. I, God forgive me! caused a false image to be placed on the altar of El Cristo de la Vega! I caused the arm to be raised—aye, I did, I did! And all because I love her, and because her slightest will is law to me! I ought not to have been a priest, for at heart I am a soldier. And yet what could I do? Oh, I have fought and struggled and prayed, I have vowed again and again that I would refuse to do her bidding, and yet have I been but a child when she hath expressed a wish. Thus I brought your swords on the day you left Toledo, I arranged everything; aye, God forgive me, I did all these things!

"Oh, do not mistake me, neither by word nor sign have I told her of my love; yet must she know of it, for I have obeyed her as blindly as a dog obeys its master. Oh, you can pity me, Brother Ruperto, for you love her also! But she is not for you, and she is not for me. She hateth you—that I know; while I am but the instrument by which she

hath worked her will. I am no more to her than the key by which she openeth a door, a mere instrument by which she worketh her will. Yet for her have I been false to my vows, for her I have lost my soul. Yet God knows I could not help myself. I could no more help loving her than a bird can help flying."

"Then will God forgive you," I said.

"Ah, you are a heretic, and know not the truth, Brother Ruperto. Why, knowing that my love for her meaneth everlasting perdition to me, yet have I followed her here!"

"How knew you she was here?" I asked.

"I followed Pablo Toledo; besides, I knew of the gipsies in Seville, and then—Oh, God help me! but I seem to know where she is; I am drawn to her even as a needle is drawn to a magnet! I long to speak to her again, and yet ought I, brother, ought I?"

"If you feel it a sin, ought you?" I made answer, for although he was so sad, so helpless—aye, and although I pitied him—jealousy was in my heart.

"And yet would I love to speak to her again. I would love to tell her that no sin attacheth to her, I would love to absolve her from those things which weigh upon her heart. I can do that, I can do that; I am still a priest!"

"And after that," I asked, "what will you do?"

"Ah, yes, I must tell you that. There is one hope for me, Brother Ruperto. I have a brother in Lisbon. He is my eldest brother, and a great lord. He hath much power, and could I but gain his ear he would send an escort to take me to a monastery in Castilia, where I could, perchance, by a life of prayer, escape the doom I have brought upon myself. But I cannot go to him, for I am a fugitive from the anger of the Church, and I know I am being sought for. Yet that is my only hope."

Concerning this and other matters we spoke long and earnestly, for the desire he had uttered was one which I wanted him to realise.

Now concerning many of the things which took place while we were in the gipsy caves in the hill outside Granada, I will not speak at length, for they have naught to do with this history. Never once did I go into the city, for I felt sure that the King's spies would be there; yet could I see the Alhambra from the gipsy encampment, although the beauties of the wondrous palace which the Moors had built were unknown to me. Moreover, I spent only three days there, because Mawgan Killigrew had a plan whereby we could all go back to England. And this, as I afterwards

discovered, was suggested to him by the king of the gipsies at Granada, who was the uncle of Inez.

"It is a fine plan, Rupert," said Mawgan eagerly. "The old gipsy knoweth of a man in Almeria, which is a small port only a night's journey from here, who hath a vessel which trades between there and the coast of France. When we once touch French soil, we shall be safe. There is but little friendship between France and Spain, and so we can travel from Marseilles to Bordeaux right speedily. Think of it, man! I shall be back in time to strike a blow for our country."

"But when we land at Marseilles," I said, "what shall we do? We shall need horses as well as money, and we have neither."

"They will be provided," said Mawgan, but he looked not straight into my eyes.

"How, and by whom?" I asked, noting his downward gaze.

"The gipsies are rich," said Mawgan, "and Inez hath much power."

"And what is to become of her?" I asked.

"I shall ask her to go with us," he replied.

"To England?"

"Aye, to England, as my wife."

"Mawgan!"

"Aye, but I shall, Rupert. Already I have spoken to the old king here, and he is willing."

"But, Mawgan, think of your father, think of what you owe to your name."

"I have thought of it," said the young Cornishman, "and I am determined. I have learnt to love her, and no man was ever loved as she loveth me. That I know, Rupert. Already have I spoken to her, and she hath consented to come with me."

Concerning this we talked much, but I could not alter his determination, and at length I desisted, for Mawgan was not a man to be thwarted when his heart was fixed.

And yet his hopes came to naught, for not long before the time came when it was arranged for us to take our departure she told him she would not go. Concerning much that she said I have no knowledge, for Mawgan would never tell me, but I knew that she told him that she loved him too well to wed him. That she was but a gipsy maid, and he a great English lord; therefore would she live her life among her own people, and in the sunny land where they had made their home. The young Cornishman's face

was almost as haggard as that of Iago Alicante when he realised that she was in earnest, but although he pleaded ardently she did but turn a deaf ear.

"It is written in the book of fate, my lord," she said. "Last night, when the stars were shining, I inquired of him who readeth the heavens, and he told me it could not be. My lord remembers the night we first saw each other, when we danced together. Ah, my lord, the story we told in the dance was our story. My heart will beat only for my lord, and never shall another lie by my side; but it is written that I cannot be my lord's wife."

During the three days we were in the gipsy encampment I did not once speak to the Señorita de Valencia. Neither for that matter did I see her, for so she had desired. She remained with her mother and Esther Truscott, and although I pleaded hard to hold converse with her, not one word would she speak until but an hour before the time of our departure.

"Señorita," I said, "a long, weary journey is before us, but I trust your troubles will soon be at an end. Once in England, we shall no longer need to fear."

"I go to England for my mother, and only for my mother," she said; "but for her I would dwell here, even though remaining here meant my death."

She looked so scornfully towards me as I spoke that my anger rose in me in spite of myself.

"You still love Spain, then?" I said bitterly.

"It is the land of faith," she said.

"When once you are in England," I replied, "your thoughts will be changed. Some day, when I see you in Cornwall, you will tell me that your life here seemed but a nightmare."

"If I see you there it will never be by my wish," she replied; "if ever I speak to you, it will be against my desire."

"Perchance my presence during the journey thither will also be hateful to you," I said.

"Surely there is no need for me to tell you that," she made answer; "you must know that the very thought of it makes life a burden."

At this I well-nigh lost control over myself, for her words cut me sorely.

"You need not fear, señorita," I said; "you shall not see me during the journey."

"You mean that you will not go with us?"

"I mean that," I replied, in tones as proud as her own. "Did I believe you would be in grave danger, I would still

brave your anger, and accompany you. But the Spanish ships of war are now in Lisbon harbour, therefore will your passage from Almeria to Marseilles be peaceful. Besides, Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth will see that no harm comes to you."

"What will you do, then?" she asked, almost eagerly I thought.

"That can be naught to you," I replied. "Enough for you to know that since by your will you will not see me again, you will never see me against it. Our next meeting will be of your seeking, and not mine."

"But your life is not worth a real in Spain," she replied. "You will be searched for everywhere, and—and——"

"That can be of no interest to you, señorita," I replied, and without another word I left her.

Of what I said to Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth I need not write; enough that I made them understand what was in my heart to do; and they, although they liked it not, yielded to my desires.

An hour after the gipsies led the way towards Almeria, I left the encampment carrying a letter written by Iago Alicante.

"I shall stay here for twenty days," said the young priest as he gave it to me. "If no one comes to me during that time I shall know it is the will of God that I go back to Seville, and suffer according to the Church's will. If, on the other hand, you be able to see my brother, I shall be able to spend my days in the monastery, and thus expiate my sins."

"I will see your brother," I said; "do not fear. You have done much for me, and now——"

"Nay, I did nothing for you, Brother Ruperto; it was for her, all for her. But she is for neither of us—it is the will of God."

"*Adios*," I said, holding out my hand.

"Oh, if you would only repent," he cried, "then might we meet in Paradise. Even as it is I cannot believe that—that——"

But he did not finish his sentence; rather he turned away from me, and then fell on his knees to pray.

"He shall be guarded safely, excellency," said Inez, who came to me as I left him. "He is but a mumbling monk, but my lord hath spoken his will."

"Good-bye, Inez," I said; "I must be in Malaga before morning."

"Aye, the night is full of clouds, yet shall you go in

safety. Two of my people shall go with you, excellency, both of whom are wary and strong."

I spoke not. Somehow I could not, for there was a tone in her voice which I had never heard before.

"You love my lord?" she said presently.

"Even as my own brother."

"It is well. Your excellency hath a bleeding heart, even as I have."

"Aye," I replied; "you have spoken the truth."

"It taketh a wise man to read a woman's heart, excellency, whether she be a gipsy or a dame of high degree. But there is a to-morrow, as well as a to-day, and in the land of silence the books of fate will be unrolled. A strong man must ever wait until his time comes. *Va usted con Dios, señor.*"

"Go you also with God, Inez," I said, and then, with a sad heart, I started on my journey southward.

CHAPTER XXXV

HOW I SAW THE GREAT ARMADA IN THE RIVER TAGUS

IT may appear to some that I acted a madman's part when I refused to accompany my companions, simply because of the caprice of a half-Spanish maid. And in truth, as I think of it now, I can well see how my determination was capable of such an explanation, especially in view of the fact that the plan to get from Almeria to Marseilles was well conceived, and easy of execution. I have not entered into any explanation of the details concerning this journey, seeing there is no need; nevertheless, everything was carefully thought out, and so well did it promise that I had no doubt that they would reach French soil in safety. On the other hand, going to Lisbon was like putting one's head in a lion's mouth. The city was full of Spanish soldiers, to whom the very name of an Englishman was offensive, and as it was their purpose to sail to England in order to destroy English Protestants, root and branch, I knew that, should I be discovered in Lisbon, they would think they were doing the will of God by torturing me and burning me.

Nevertheless, when the señorita spoke in the fashion I have described, I felt there was no other course open to me. Nay, more; even before she avowed her hatred of my presence I had seriously contemplated this step, so that now it seemed to me as though the hand of God pointed in this direction.

The two things which determined me were these: First, I desired very greatly to help Iago Alicante. I reflected much concerning the way he had served me, and although I felt like laughing at his fears concerning the anger of God, yet did I pity him sorely. It is true I heeded not the curses of the Church one whit, but to him they were weighty with unspeakable terror. When, therefore, as we talked together again and again concerning his desire to gain admission into a monastery, where his brother had great power, and where he could find peace through prayer and penance, I greatly longed to bring about the thing he desired. But this was not all. I wanted to see this great Armada, *La Armada Invencible*, as the Spaniards called it, and then get back to my own country, with all the speed I might, and tell Admiral Drake, and Sir Richard Grenville, and the rest of them, what we should have to fight.

Of my adventures in getting to Lisbon there is no need that I should write, nor, for that matter, is there much to relate, for truly I found but little difficulty. I arrived at Malaga the morning after my departure from Granada, where I found a Portuguese vessel just starting for Lisbon. As chance would have it, moreover, the captain was short-handed, and gladly availed himself of my offer to work my passage. Neither did he suspect me of being an Englishman; indeed, he took me for a gipsy rather than aught else, for not only did I wear the garb common to gipsies, but the two who accompanied me on my journey thither, also went with me to the wharf where the Portuguese boat was anchored. I soon discovered, moreover, that although Portugal had been annexed to Spanish dominion, the Portuguese loved not the Spaniards; rather they hated them, and were even at this time planning to break away from Philip's power. Had I told the captain I was an Englishman, therefore, I doubt whether he would have betrayed me; nevertheless, I held my peace, for it is never wise to run foolish risks.

"When arrive we at Lisbon?" I asked one of the Portuguese officers, when at length the vessel had set sail, and the great castle on the hill just outside Malaga was fading slowly out of sight.

At first he hardly understood my question, for he knew but little of Spanish, and as I knew scarcely a word of Portuguese, I had to ask him in that language. At length I discovered that if the wind continued in our favour we ought to arrive there in three days.

"I fear we shall have much trouble in landing," he informed me presently.

"Aye, and why?" I asked.

"Because the Tagus is full of great ships of war," he replied, "and all other vessels will fare badly until they sail to England. Especially Portuguese vessels."

"But I thought all were under Spanish law, Portuguese as well as Spanish?"

"Aye," he replied; "yet doth the Spaniard treat the men of Portugal as though they were dogs. Curse them! You who have no country cannot feel as we do. Nevertheless, you, too, must hate the swaggering dons, for they have treated the gipsies with much cruelty."

"Aye," I replied; "think you they will conquer the English?"

"Ah, I hope not, I pray not. The English be not Catholics, but they be a brave people. Think of what the great Drake did not a year ago at Cadiz. But now—oh, it

is a great fleet, a mighty fleet! Perchance we shall see it before it sails."

"When sails it?" I asked.

"Men say on the twenty-fifth day of the month," he replied. "If the wind continues with us, we shall enter the Tagus the day before."

"And how do the Spaniards treat your vessels?" I asked.

"Ah, they shrug their shoulders, they spit on us, but they let us pass. They say it dirties their hands to touch us. But there is a to-morrow."

Now this was greatly pleasing to me, for it gave me hope that I should enter Lisbon without trouble. In this, moreover, I was not disappointed; and, as the officer had predicted, we entered the mouth of the Tagus on the night of April 24th in the year of our Lord 1588. We made but slow headway up the river, and when day broke we were in the midst of a great sea of masts, and surrounded by the greatest display of battleships the world had ever seen.

No sooner was our boat anchored than, according to my arrangement with the captain, I went ashore, and then began to cast about in order to find Don Guzman de Alicante. I felt that I must act warily, or I should immediately be suspected; yet I did not feel that I was in the midst of enemies, for I was not long in discovering that the Portuguese in Lisbon neither hoped nor prayed for the success of the Great Armada. Nevertheless, as I looked at the mighty fleet, my heart sunk within me, for how, I thought, could even Drake, and Grenville, and Raleigh overcome such a mighty host?

It was barely daylight, and not many people were on the quay, but presently, seeing a man who looked like a Spaniard, I spoke to him.

"The quay is well-nigh empty, señor," I said.

"Aye, but the streets are full," he replied. "You be a stranger, or you would know."

"I have but lately come from Malaga," I replied, "and men there know not of the great doings here."

"Ah! that is so; yet soon shall the standard be blessed in the Iglesia Major, and in a few hours the great fleet will sail."

"To England?" I said.

"Aye, to England—where else? Are you a sailor, señor?"

"I have just come from the sea," I replied, noting with satisfaction the clothes I wore, and which I had obtained from one of the men with whom I had sailed.

"Was ever such a fleet known?" he said, proudly. "I have come here to see it now before the great crowds come. Aye, but who can resist the Spaniard?"

"Think you they will overcome the English easily?" asked.

"Can you doubt it, señor? Is there not here the might of the world? And yet——"

"Do you doubt?" I asked.

"The Duke of Medina!" he said, scornfully. "A landsman—a fool! Fit to play with children, or to drive cattle to market—but to fight—tah! Still, what would you? Who are the English—who is any man—that he should resist the Spaniard? Besides, the cause is God's, and the battle will be His! What would you? The monks and priests and nuns have been praying for years, so what doubt can there be? Then look at the flags. See the crosses, see the images of the Madonna, and the saints."

"Aye," I said, quietly.

"Ah, you think of Drake and Cadiz," he said. "Ah, well, and so do I. But think of all the prayers; think of the army of priests who go. No cards, no dice, no pleasure. Every soldier and sailor hath been confessed and shriven. All quarrels are made up. Every morning the ships' boys will sing 'Good Morrow,' and every night the *Ave Maria*. Then think of the watchwords laid down for every day in the week: Sunday, Jesus; Monday, The Holy Ghost; Tuesday, The Holy Trinity; Wednesday, Santiago; Thursday, The Angels; Friday, All Saints; Saturday, Our Lady. What would you, I say? And yet I had more faith if we had another leader; aye, and if they had better provision and more powder."

"Have they not enough of these things?" I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Who can complain when the King speaks?" he said. "Besides, look at the vessels. See that galleon, with the great banner floating? That is *San Martin*, in which the Duke shall sail! Aye, but one hundred and fifty priests to sixty doctors! it is badly arranged; but then I am not so religious as I should be—so the priests say."

"Still, it is a mighty fleet."

"Aye, a mighty fleet. One hundred and thirty ships. See those galleons, every one of them can carry a thousand tons, and the galleasses, the galleys! Great God! was ever the like seen before? Then, think, nine thousand seamen, all old sailors, and seventeen thousand soldiers, the best the world can produce! What can the English do? But I am told they are brave people. They have kicked

out the priests, too! Ha, ha! But Padre Iago tells me I am not religious! Would you see the procession come from the Iglesia Major, señor? Now that I have looked on the great fleet, I go back and watch!"

Whereupon I went with him into the city, where every street was lined with soldiers, and where a great crowd stood hushed and expectant.

Presently we saw the procession, concerning which I have been asked many times to describe, for I am one of the very few Englishmen in the world who saw it. And in truth it was a great procession. First of all came many churchmen, before whom were carried banners portraying the glories of the Church, and after them came a great number of other ecclesiastics, who chanted prayers on their way. After these were princes, and nobles of high degree, who were followed by knights and squires from every part of Europe. In truth, it was a gay company, and yet, as they marched to the chanting of the priests, it looked more like a great funeral procession than a mighty army going to battle.

"There, that is the Cardinal Archduke!" said my companion. "Ah, he loves good wine! On his right hand is the Duke of Medina, while behind him is one of the faithful English. He is hated much there, I am told—Father Parsons!"

"Yes," I said quietly, although my blood ran cold as I saw him. "He looks more dead than alive, eh?"

"Ah, yes, but the English are a strange-looking race. Then what would you? Have they not defied the Church? Do they not allow a Jezebel to sit on the throne? Ah, there is Don Guzman de Alicante!"

"Doth he sail with the fleet?"

"No. Would that he did, aye, and commanded everything. But he hath quarrelled with the Duke of Medina."

And so he went on talking, while the great procession went from the church to the palace, where guns were fired, and from whence, after some little time, all the soldiers and sailors, together with their leaders, marched to their boats, and presently boarded the great galleons that lay anchored in the river. I had been told that they willed to leave Lisbon before noon, yet it was well-nigh sundown before the great fleet had left the harbour, and slowly sailed down the river.

As the Spaniard had said, it was a mighty fleet, and yet, the more I considered it, the less did I fear the results. And this not without reason, for not reckoning upon the fact that the English sailors had vastly gained in courage and con-

fidence during the reign of our beloved Queen, and that they never knew when they were beaten, the Spanish sailors did not look as though they had great hopes. Report had it that many tried to desert, while there seemed little doubt, mighty as the fleet was, it was badly provisioned, both with food for the men as well as powder for the guns. Nevertheless, I longed greatly to hasten back to England in order to tell of what I had seen and heard, the which I presently, and without delay, set out to do.

Now, concerning my visit to Don Guzman de Alicante I will say nothing, save that after passing through many dangers I accomplished my purpose, and gained the assurance that the young Padre de Alicante should, at all events, be saved from the anger of the Church. Neither will I attempt to describe my journey from Lisbon to England, for while it was full of adventure, as well as many narrow escapes, it is not vitally connected with the body of this history. Moreover, were I to begin to describe what took place, I should find that I had committed myself to a recital well-nigh as long as what I have previously written. Suffice to say that after much hardship, and after facing many dangers, I arrived in Southampton waters, much wondering what the future would be, yet with a good heart within me withal. For during my own journey I had heard that the Great Armada had fared badly through bad weather and sickness. Report had it that the fleet had become scattered through great storms, and after losing a vast number of men through the lack of proper food, the Duke of Medina had put into Coruña, where he remained some time in order the hearten the fleet. I had also learnt that more than once the Admiral had been minded to give up the whole business, believing that God was against him, and showed His anger by sending bad weather. These, with many other things, did I learn, and I was about to start for Plymouth Hoe when, as chance would have it, I learned that a boat was about to set sail for Falmouth Harbour. As may be imagined, after telling something of my story to the captain, I found no difficulty in getting a passage thither; but though I pleaded hard I could not persuade him to land me at Plymouth, where I learned that my old friends were.

"I tell thee, Master Hamstead," said the captain, "right gladly would I call at Plymouth, but I must e'en go to Falmouth as fast as wind can carry me, for if what thou sayst be true, then if I get not there quickly I get not at all. If I have a chance to land thee I will, but if not, then must I take thee to Falmouth, where thou canst get a horse and ride to Sir Richard Grenville and the rest of them."

With this I had to be content, whereupon we set sail, and in due time we reached Falmouth. Now, seeing that it seemed the will of God that I should go to Falmouth, I made up my mind that I would go to Arwenack the same night; for, as will need no telling, I had wondered oft and much whether Mawgan Killigrew and John Trenoweth had succeeded in bringing the women home. In truth, as we passed the great headland which stands north of Pendennis Castle, I found my heart beating like mad at the thought that I was, perchance, near the woman I loved so much, although she had heaped such scorn upon me.

"Perchance I may see her in an hour or two," I said to myself, for it was now early morning, and I reckoned that by seven o'clock the people at Arwenack would be stirring.

This being so, I eagerly looked towards the great house as we sailed into the harbour, which, since Raleigh had spoken about it to Queen Elizabeth, had come somewhat into fame; and so intent was I upon what lay landward that I scarcely noted the sailors who stood on shore with their eyes seaward. When we drew up to the quay, however, I noted they were thinking of matters other than that of our incoming, and presently we found the reason.

"What may it be, Captain Retallick?" said one.

"Gor jay," said another, "but et might be as ef another country 'ad comed up out of the say droo the night."

I therefore looked in the direction towards which their eyes were set, and then my heart rose in my mouth.

"A boat!" I cried; "row me across the mouth of the bay and let us climb the headland."

At this, we made our way towards St. Anthony's point, and when we had reached the highest place I looked long and steadily seaward.

"What do 'ee make out ev et?" said one.

"Iss, maaster, do 'ee tell us, then," added another.

"The Spaniards!" I cried.

"Es et, then? Well, we be'ant afeard, maaster."

"No, thank God," I cried; "but Master Killigrew must know?"

"Iss, to be sure. What time es et now, then?"

"'Tis just turned six," I replied. "He will be abed yet; but you must go. Aye, and tell him that Master Rupert Hamstead hath come back from Spain, and that the first thing he saw on coming into the harbour was the Spanish fleet. It is miles long, and is shaped like a half moon."

"Aye, but Maaster Mawgan will be fine'n glad?"

"Is he back?" I asked eagerly.

"Iss, to be sure. He comed home a month agone, he and John Trenoweth and three women; but he went off more'n a week agone to meet Admiral Drake at Plymouth."

"Well, go and tell Master Killigrew what I have told you. Master Rupert Hamstead, mind; don't forget the name. As for me, I must get a horse without a moment's waiting, and ride to Plymouth that I may tell Admiral Hawkins and Drake and the rest of them what we have seen."

"Aye, and God speed you, Maaster Hamstead. I'll tell 'ee where you can get a hoss. Come with me to Penny-come-quick, and Maaster Luke Trevise 'll laive 'ee 'ave a hoss."

Half an hour later I was flying away from Falmouth as fast as a good horse could carry me, my heart all ablaze with the news I carried, yet sad withal because I had not set eyes upon the maid I was longing to see. It was, as I have said, a good horse I rode, and strong into the bargain, but I was not a light man, and so I could not ride him as fast as I longed. Yet did I cover the ground at a good rate, as may be expected. Only once did I stop, and that was at Lostwithiel, where I rested an hour, not for my own sake, but that the horse should not have to gallop on an empty belly, and because I did not believe that I should gain aught by killing the poor beast.

When I reached Plymouth the bells were ringing, as though there was the crowning of a new king.

"Ah," I thought, "they have not heard the news, or the people would not rejoice so." Still, I did not stop to tell any man what I knew, for I must needs tell my news first to Hawkins or Drake.

I rode straight to the Hoe, for I knew that much of the British fleet lay in the harbour beyond, and when I reached it I saw that the people were all agog with some great news.

"Who's this?" I heard a deep voice say.

"It's I, Rupert Hamstead, Sir Francis," I cried.

"Aye, and so it is," cried the great admiral. "You remember him, Hawkins—son of Sir Richard, and as good a fighter as I know of. Welcome, lad, welcome! Aye, and what do you think, I've beaten the Port Admiral here, aye, beaten him hollow. I always told him that he could not match me at bowls. Now, then, tell me how you've fared, my lad, for I've heard how you went to Spain to outwit the Dons in their own country, and to bring home English women."

"Another time I will tell you everything, Sir Francis,"

I cried, " but now I may not. I saw the Armada this very morning, Sir Francis, and Admiral Hawkins. It was coming up the Channel. I saw it off Menach Point, near Falmouth, and I've ridden like blazes to tell you."

" Aye, good lad ; but we know it. A roystering fellow called Fleming was before you ; nay, it was but half an hour since he was here. He saw it off the Lizard. We scarce knew if he spoke the truth, he is such a long-tongued rogue ; but now we be sure. Well, thank God, I say."

" I did not think you could have known," I cried, all taken aback by the cool way he spoke.

" Why, lad ? "

" Because you and the admiral were——"

" Playing bowls, eh ? Ha, ha ! You thought I should get flurried and not finish my game. I thought you knew me better, Rupert, lad. Why should I hurry, I say. We have a good cause, and we've good men. Why should we fear these Dons ? I say God is on our side, and we fear not."

Now this put heart into me right away ; for here was heartiness and courage which I did not see that day in Lisbon, and I felt that these men could no more be beaten than a lion could be beaten by a dozen yelping terriers.

" Nevertheless, I have much to tell you, Sir Francis," I said. " I saw the Armada before it sailed out of Lisbon harbour. I know how many vessels there be, and how they be manned. I saw the Spaniards embark, admiral."

" God-a-mercy, did you ! Then you be a lad who can tell us something. So come right away with us, lad, and tell us all that is in your mind, for I can see that your eyes be blazing on account of the hotness of your heart."

After this I told him what I have written down here, and a great deal more concerning those things which I saw and heard in Lisbon, as well as of what I had been told concerning what took place when Admiral Medina had put out to sea.

" Thank you, lad, thank you ! " they both said when I had done. " What you have told us is great news, and valuable news, and shall not be forgotten. And we shall beat them, lad, never fear ! God hates this slavery of Popery, and hath decreed that England shall be once and forever free from it. I tell thee, we will follow them to their doom ; and although Pope and King have boasted, we will, by the blessing of God, show them that the Lord is on the side of freedom and of true religion."

" The Spaniards still smart because of what you did at

Cadiz, Sir Francis!" I laughed, for somehow these sea-lions made my heart as light as a feather, and as fearless as an eagle.

"Do they?" he laughed. "Eh, I said I would singe King Philip's beard, and I did. We could have done more, too, if her Gracious Majesty would have allowed. But a woman is a woman, queen or no queen, my boy; and that's no treason, eh, Hawkins?"

"I would we had more powder, though, Drake," responded the admiral.

"Aye, aye," said Drake, with a sigh. "But we did our best. Besides, we've enough to blow up the Dons, and by the mercy of God we will, too! Now then, Rupert, I have room for you—aye, and a place for you on my own vessel."

"Thank God!" I cried.

"Aye, thank God! for we fight on His side; but thou must feed, man, and feed well. Then will we follow the Dons, and God will give us the victory."

CHAPTER XXXVI

A FLAME OF FIRE

OF the coming of the Great Armada, and of the way we fought them and chased them I must not pretend to write, for when I think of it my pen falters. My brain becomes all dazed, too, for that fight was surely the greatest the sun ever shone upon. Besides, I could write only of the doings of the vessel on which I sailed; while the telling of that story would be the word of many men, not only English, but Spanish. In truth, the Spanish story would be even more thrilling than ours, for although we chased them with right good will, pouring cannon balls on them on every side, the vessels we accounted for were but few in number —that is, when we bear in mind the great fleet Philip sent to us. Not that we did not cripple them sorely; nay, we gave them such a taste of our quality as the Spaniards never dreamed of, and we should have made greater havoc of them had the Queen been less stingy of food and powder. In truth, when I think of this, and when I remember the unnecessary suffering of thousands of the brave men into whom God ever breathed the breath of life, I find it hard to forgive our Virgin Queen. Not that I believe in aught of the vile stories which the Jesuits diligently reported concerning her; thank God, no honest man can doubt her chastity; nevertheless, in the matter of generosity and gratitude she was sadly wanting, and thus well-nigh broke the hearts of those who were giving their lives for their Queen and country. For not only did she accuse her bravest and noblest servants of dishonesty, but she did it even when they were impoverishing themselves that the English sailors might have food to eat. Moreover, in the matter of ammunition we were sadly lacking, and had each vessel a full supply but few Spaniards would have escaped to tell the tale of their woes. Still, we did whip them, and right badly; and he whose brain and heart did, under the blessing of God, lead us to victory, was Sir Francis Drake. And this I say boldly, and every honest man in the English fleet who fought with us will say, "Aye, aye," to my words. As I learnt while I was in Spain, it was their habit to call him "the great sea-dog," but afterwards, when the scattered vessels began to arrive at Coruña and San Sebastian, having lost hosts of their men in fight, and famine, and sickness, they cried out that Francis Drake was a devil, and no man.

But in spite of all this it was God, and not Drake, that saved England, for when he had driven them northward, He Who holds the winds in His fists, and the seas in the hollow of His hands, took up our cause, and humbled the proud Dons to the dust. This, as it seems to me, no man can deny. It is true they came to us blessed by archbishop and Pope, who commended them to angels and saints. Their vessels were named after saints and apostles, who they thought were on their side; but all this availed them nothing, for the God of truth and right gave us strength to drive them before us. Nevertheless, it was the great seas of God that broke their power. The Spaniards claimed that the elements would be on their side, yet did God break their great timbers like matchwood by the aid of rocks and rolling breakers, until presently they were whirled on the most dangerous shores in the world, and the few who crawled ashore did so only to fall prey to the maws of the angry Irish wolves. Moreover, after this our people learnt on which side God was, and from that time thousands who had leanings towards Popery declared that God was tired of a religion that meant bondage, cruelty, and lies.

But, as I have said, no man lives who can truly describe the doings in that mighty week; much less I, who am but poorly gifted in the matter of writing. Suffice, therefore, to say that when we had chased them into the Scotch seas, we turned our faces southward. And this we did for two reasons. One was that we knew they dare not come back to fight us, and second, because through the stinginess of her Majesty we were so ill-provided both with food and ammunition that it was madness to chase them further in seas that grew wilder and wilder.

It was a black, stormy day, when after much hardship and suffering, we presently sailed up the Thames towards London Town. We were worn and weather-beaten, yet did our hearts rejoice because of our great work, and because God had so blessed us. Moreover, men had it that the great admiral had brave stories to tell the Queen concerning me, not only concerning what I had told him when I came to him on Plymouth Hoe, but what I had done during the great fight. And this I will here say, that though the English heroes who fought the Queen's battles were never rewarded according to their merits, to me her Majesty was both kind and generous, bestowing upon me not only rank, but riches, so that although I grieve at the way she treated others, I have naught to complain of concerning myself.

The church bells were ringing finely when we entered the town, and the rejoicings were great, as indeed they should

be, although the day for universal gladness had not come. I might have been made much of also, had I so desired; but I did not stay one minute longer than was absolutely needful. And this was not to be wondered at, for a year had passed since I left my father's house, and I was but fourteen miles from the town of Barnet, near which my father lived. As soon as I might, therefore, I started for home, which I reached in less than two hours from the time of my starting, for the horse I obtained was strong and willing, and I did in no way spare him. Still, it was night when I rode up to my father's door, and then, without waiting even to call a stable boy, I made great speed into the house.

"Mother! Father!" I shouted aloud, and quicker than it takes me to tell it I was in my mother's arms.

"Aye, God bless you, my son!" she cried, after we had kissed each other a hundred times. "News came to us from Plymouth town that your duty to your country gave you no time to come to us. It grieved me sorely not to see you, but I did not complain, seeing your father could not join with others in fighting for us."

"And where is he—my father?" I asked.

"He is but just recovering from a long illness, the which hath been much aggravated because he could not bear his part in the fight, and because of the news we have heard."

"What news?" I asked, for I liked not the tone of her voice.

"Come to your father, my son," said my mother; "and remember always that you are the child of God, as well as the son of Sir Richard Hamstead!"

At this, and without another word, she led me to my father's room, where presently I saw him sitting up in his bed.

"Aye, Rupert, my lad," he said, "this repays me for being chained here like a dog to a piece of wood. I have fretted sorely that I could not strike a blow for my Queen and country, but God is good; He hath raised up unto me a son who hath taken my place, and He hath helped him to fight His battles."

At that my father held me closely to him, and I heard him say many times, "God bless the dear lad! God bless the dear lad!"

"Now then, father, tell me the news which hath troubled you," I said, after we had talked together some little time.

"As to that, my boy, I may not until I know what happened to you in Spain," he replied.

"Hath your news aught to do with that?" I asked.

"Aye, it hath, or so it seems to me," he replied; "but

the man John Trenoweth stayed only long enough to tell me half a story, for when he found you were not here he hurried away like a madman."

"John Trenoweth! hath he been here?" I asked.

"Aye, only yesterday was he here, and the story he told me hath so troubled me that to-day my head hath been like a burning fire."

"Tell me! tell me!" I cried.

"I can tell you no sense until I hear what happened to you in Spain," replied my father.

So, hard as it was to do, I sat down by my father's side, and then, holding my mother's hand, I related in brief outline what I have set down in these pages.

"Then you love this maid!" cried my mother.

"Aye, mother," I replied, "I love her!"

"Oh, my son, my son!"

"Nay, mother, but I love you not one whit the less—rather more."

"It is not that, my dear son. God save me from ever being jealous of my own son. She is a brave woman, too—aye, and I think a good woman, although she hath Spanish blood in her veins; but Rupert, she—she—tell him, Richard, for I cannot."

"It is this, Rupert, my lad. That man's son—Toledo, I mean—hath come to England!"

"Aye," I said, "and what then?"

"He hath been to Cornwall and hath taken her away; at least, so I gathered from Trenoweth's wild words."

"What, taken Isabella to Spain!"

"Aye, it would seem so. She was, I fear, left unprotected. Old Sir John Tremayne is but little fitted to deal with a wily Spaniard; while, as you know, Mawgan Killigrew was given command of a vessel."

"Aye, I know of that, although I saw him not; but that was no wonder. We were too busy fighting to know aught concerning our comrades."

"Ah! I can well believe that; but this, I imagine, gave the Spaniard his chance. You see, Tom Killigrew's hands were full with affairs of State, while John Trenoweth was fully occupied; and thus, Mawgan Killigrew being on high seas, the fellow was able to work his will."

"And you say he hath taken her away?"

"Aye, so I gathered from John Trenoweth; but in truth he seemed so mazed that I could scarce make out what he was saying. Your story, however, hath made it all clear. He knew that you loved her, and came here to tell you concerning what had taken place."

"Went she with him willingly?" I asked, as quietly as I could, yet was my voice husky, for my heart was well-nigh bursting.

"Nay, I know not. The Cornishman could tell me nothing plainly. This only he said as he rode away: 'Tell Master Rupert, the hour he returns, to make straight for Falmouth, or the devil will prove too strong for him. Tell him I have seen the devil, although he eludes me like a cloud, and that she hath seen him, and that he hath tempted her. Tell him that I have not enough cunning to match him, and that it is for him to fight his own battle.'"

"Then she hath not yet gone with him?" I cried.

"It would seem not; yet from other things he told me, I judged that they were gone away together."

"It cannot be. Else why should he bid me come to Falmouth. Father, you will lend me a good horse, and I will get it saddled?"

"Not to-night, Rupert!"

"Did you wait when you heard that my mother was in danger?"

"No, my God, no! Away then, lad. Faith, see to it that Rupert hath all things: money and good clothes, and —and everything. But tell me something of the great battle before you go, lad! Are the Spaniards conquered?"

"Aye, I think so."

"We have heard that they were driven northward; but they may return, my lad!"

"They never will, father!"

"I pray not. Already have I had great stocks of faggots placed on every hill on the estate, as have a hundred other owners of land, all over the country. We await only the signal from London town to light them, my boy!"

"Aye, and the signal will come soon, father, fear not!"

"And the great Admiral, what will he say when thou returnest not to duty?"

"I know not; but I must do the bidding of John Trenoweth. I tell you, father—I—I——"

But I could speak no more, for my mind was all of a daze, and then without more ado I left his bedroom, and a few minutes later I was on horseback, riding for dear life.

Of the things which happened on my way to Cornwall I have but little remembrance. This I know: when one horse was exhausted, I sold it and bought another, recking nothing of the fact that I wasted money like water. Of food and rest I had little, so eager was I to know the truth concerning what John Trenoweth had said; yet I felt neither hunger nor weariness. By my side hung the sword

my mother had given me when I started for Spain, and which I had taken afterwards from Pablo Toledo. Often and often did I half draw it from its scabbard, and then thrust it back again, at one time longing to thrust it into the heart of the Spaniard, and at others telling myself that had I been in his place I would do even as he was doing. Often did I upbraid myself for going to Cornwall at all, even although I rode all the faster while doing so.

"Why do I go?" I asked myself. "She hateth me, she hath told me so a hundred times. She hath mocked me, scorned me, repulsed me! She is a Papist, and half a Spaniard. She careth more for Toledo than for me, even although she hath no love for him. She told me she desired never to see me again, while I told her I would never come to her side save at her own call. Why should I go, then?"

But still I urged my horse forward, and vowed never to rest until I met her face to face.

When I had passed Truro town, I tried to bethink me of some plan. Where should I go? What should I do? I did not know where she was, even although she still remained in Cornwall. Neither could I tell where Pablo Toledo might be hiding himself. Presently I bethought me that her mother would go to Sir John Tremayne's house, and it would be thither that Pablo Toledo would repair; so presently, when I had left Truro far behind me, I struck into the road which led to Tremayne Hall.

The time, I remember, was evening; and although it was not yet dark, the shades of night had begun to gather. All around were great woods, and these, the leaves not having yet fallen from the trees, made all things sombre.

"There be many Papists still in Cornwall," I reflected; "that is why Pablo Toledo is able to hide. The county, moreover, is so cut off from the rest of the country that things may be done here which would be impossible farther northward. Mawgan Killigrew told me that, even now, there are many Papist chapels up and down the county where the priests administer the rites of their Church to faithful Catholics."

These thoughts, I remember, passed through my mind as I crossed a valley where a little stream of water gurgled its way to the river which lay a mile or two northward, and as I climbed the hill on the other side two men passed me, who made me feel as though I had seen a ghost. The one I saw plainly, while the face of the other was somewhat hidden.

"Father Parsons!" I almost exclaimed aloud; and a man might well count a hundred before I could recover from my surprise. When I was able to collect my thoughts, I

turned to look for them, but they were nowhere in sight. For a moment I reflected whether I should follow them, but only for a moment. She was not with them, and therefore I had nothing to say to them.

"Was the other Pablo Toledo?" I asked myself. "It looked like him, yet am I not sure. But things augur well if it was. She hath not yet left England."

Upon this I rode hard to Tremayne Hall, my heart all of a flutter, for I felt that soon God would decide whether aught of joy would come into my heart again, or whether I should have to spend my days under a great black cloud. I had scarce entered the house when I knew that something was afoot.

"Master Mawgan Killigrew hath come back," I heard one of the serving men say; "and the Spaniards whom we did not kill have all been drowned in the northern seas. To-night the fires will be lighted. Praise God, and three cheers for the Queen!"

So excited was the fellow that he did not heed me; so I crossed the hall, and placed my hand upon his shoulder.

"Where is your master?" I asked.

"They be all in there," he said, pointing to a doorway, and then like a man beside himself he tore away from me.

By this time I was almost as much wrought upon as he, and, without waiting for ceremony, I entered the room which the fellow had indicated.

"Aye, Rupert Hamstead!" cried old Sir John as he saw me. "Hast returned to Cornwall, then? God bless thee, lad! Thou knowest everything! Think of it! Welcome, lad, welcome! My daughter here—with her daughter! Aye, and the Spaniards all dead! Think of it!" And the old man walked around the room like one mad, and fairly cried for joy. "Aye, and we owe much to thee, too. Here is my dear daughter. God bless thee, Rupert! As for Isabella—where is she? It is but a moment ago that she was here. She must have gone out."

But he had no need to tell me this, for I had seen her start up as I entered, and then take a step towards me as though to welcome me. Then I had seen a look of ghastly terror come into her eyes, whereupon she had left the room like one who would fly from a pestilence.

"Ah, Rupert, my lad," went on the old Cornishman, "this is a glad day, a glad day! I am twenty years younger than when I saw thee last. As for my daughter, a few weeks in a Christian country hath made her a new woman. Look at her, she looks strong and well now! And Mawgan Killigrew hath come back. As for the Spaniards—but thou knowest! Half their vessels sunk by

our guns, and the rest driven to the north seas, where God finished our work. In an hour from now every hill shall blaze with the fires. But where hast thou come from, lad ? "

"From home, Sir John, but I must not stay longer," I said in a husky voice. "Is John Trenoweth here ? "

"Nay, nay, John is wedded. He lives at—but art ill, Rupert, lad—art ill ? "

"Nay," I replied. "I rejoice with you," I continued, trying to overcome the blow which had fallen on me. "It is a glad day, a glad day ! I rejoice with you ; but I must go and see Mawgan—to-morrow I may come again ! Good-night, Sir John, good-night."

I mounted my horse like a man in a dream, while my heart lay cold within me, as though it were a stone ; but I had not ridden far when it began to grow hot with rage.

"If I cannot have her, he shall not," I said. "I will kill him, even as my father should have killed his father years ago. It was him I saw. Of this I am sure ; he and Father Parsons—two devils in counsel."

I turned my horse's head towards the valley near which I had seen these men, and when I approached it I heard the sound of voices.

"It is they ! " I said. "God is good to me ! He hath delivered them into my hands ! "

I drew my sword from its sheath and dismounted ; then I went towards the spot from whence the sound of the voices came. Hearing nothing, I stopped and looked around me.

"They heard me coming and are gone," I said ; then my heart beat wildly, for I heard voices near me again, and one of them was that of Isabella de Valencia.

"It is your only safety, my child " ; it was Father Parsons who spoke. "No Catholic will be safe in England now—and remember that you are a Catholic, and can never be anything else. The English hate Catholics now—they will not let one live, especially if they be Spanish, and you have Spanish blood in your veins, my child. Besides, it is your duty. The Church wills that you shall wed Pablo Toledo ; it commands it. Come, then, to the little chapel close by, and you shall be made husband and wife even before——"

But I heard no more. I rushed towards them, and cried aloud in my frenzy, "Fight, Pablo Toledo ; fight, you priest of darkness ! "

At this Pablo Toledo, for it was he who stood there, drew his sword with an angry oath, and we fell to fighting. I scarce knew what thought I had in doing this, for hope had died out of me ; only I felt that the world had not

room for me and this man at the same time. I was a desperate man, and Pablo Toledo yielded before me inch by inch. In three passes I sent his sword flying into the air, and then, he having fallen, I held my blade close to his throat. I had wounded him before, but now I determined to kill him. I lifted my hand to strike the blow, when I heard a cry of terror behind me, and then my hand became nerveless.

"She loves him," I thought; "she is pleading with me to spare him! Well, let him live," and with that I turned my eyes towards her, only to see her holding Father Parsons' arm even while he struggled to free himself from her.

"Let me kill the heretic," he cried. "I will kill him; it is for your soul's salvation!"

"No, no—never!"

At that moment I heard the peal of a gun, and from the headland near I saw a flame of fire shoot heavenward. This was followed by a mighty shout, the shout of thousands of men who had gathered together!

"Hurrah!" they cried. "Hurrah! We've beaten the Spaniard! Hurrah! God be praised!"

But Father Parsons paid no heed to this; neither did he note that I had not yet killed the Spaniard, even though I held him at my mercy.

"You love this heretic dog," he cried savagely.

"Aye, I love him! I can help myself no longer. I love him!" and at those words I was lifted into heaven.

"Root it out of your heart: it is of the devil. It will mean your soul's eternal damnation!"

"I cannot help it. I love him! I love him!"

"Then *you* shall die!" he cried, mad with rage. "You shall never wed this vile unbeliever, who hath again and again thwarted me."

With that, he turned upon her, his hand uplifted to strike.

"Rupert, Rupert, come to me!"

In a moment I was by her side, and in a moment more Father Parsons lay upon the ground like a man dead.

Above, the full moon shone almost as brightly as the sun, and thus I saw her face plainly.

"Isabella! Isabella!" I said, trembling like a leaf, for even yet I could not realise the meaning of the words she had spoken. "Do you still hate me?"

For a moment she stood looking at me, as though she knew not what to do. I saw that her eyes were burning like coals of fire, while her whole body trembled like a leaf in the wind.

"Will you that I go away?" I cried, not knowing what

I was saying, and scarce had the words passed than she threw herself into my arms, and fell a-sobbing.

"No, no, Rupert," she cried; "never, never!"

Even as she spoke I could not help looking at Señor Toledo, who had half risen from the ground, and was binding up the wound I had made in his right arm.

At the sight of them she shuddered, and then, not being self-contained and reserved like many of Northern blood, she spoke out of a full heart. Besides, she seemed to think I was still angry with her, and now, having confessed her love for me to Father Parsons, she kept nothing back.

"Come away," she cried, "I cannot bear to be longer near them. I bore it as long as I could. For months they have tortured me. For months they have told me that loving you was being false to my faith; for months they have made me fear the anger of God. But I could not help loving you, could I? It came to me that day when I first saw you in Toledo, and it hath been burning in my heart ever since! I tried so hard to destroy it, but I could not. I loved you, even when I believed I should burn in hell for my love; and I did the things I believed you would have me do, even when I tried to hate you. I told you that you were loathsome to me, when all the while I was ready to die for you. When I parted from you in Granada, my heart burned to beseech you to come with me. I longed to have you near me even when I drove you from me. Through you I have ceased to believe in the religion which I was taught to believe. I could not believe it, when, in the name of that religion, you were to be put to death. Oh, Rupert, my love, my love, will you forgive me?"

And there, while the great flame of fire on the headland leapt heavenward, and while thousands of brave Cornishmen thanked God that we were freed from the Spaniard, I clasped her to my heart, which was also a flame of fire, and I told her of my great joy.

"Oh, it was so hard to free myself from the chains they had bound round me!" she cried again presently. "Oh, I tried to hate you, I tried to be true to the faith I had been taught to believe; but how could I? All the time my heart was burning for love of you, and the more I loved you, the more false did those things which the priests urged upon me become. All the cruelty, the torture, not only of body, but of mind, became—but you can understand, Rupert!"

All this did she say to me and more; for now, after all the dark months of sorrow and danger were over, she could no longer restrain herself. The fires of love which had been burning in her heart, even while she tried to destroy them,

now burst into a flame, and I knew that no man since the world began was ever loved as my love loved me.

Of Father Parsons and Pablo Toledo I took no heed. All my anger for them had died away in the knowledge of the love of my dear maid. Away on the headland the great flames still shot into the sky, while the shouts of the Cornishmen echoed among hill and dale.

"You would never have wedded him?" I said presently.

"No, no, not that—but I was afraid. When you came into the room to-night you frightened me. Through all the long months I have believed that my love for you meant the loss of my soul. Father Parsons made me believe this, even although I knew my faith was becoming less and less. That was why I fled; that was why I—but you know. When you came to us and bade them fight, I could neither speak nor move until I saw Father Parsons lift his knife to kill you. Then I could bear it no more. Then I knew everything. All their threats concerning the fires of hell became as nothing to me, and—and——"

Then my dear came to my arms again, while I vowed to God that I would be true to the great love which burnt in her heart, even as it burnt in mine, a love which was stronger than death or the fear of hell.

Of my return to Tremayne Hall with Isabella by my side, and of the great rejoicing which followed, I will not write, for this is one of the things which a man cannot tell without spoiling. Neither need I describe my meeting with Mawgan, nor tell of the happiness of John Trenoweth and his wife Esther. Any man who hath read this story from the beginning will know what is in my heart to write. For that matter I will not describe at length how my dear father and mother, as well as my brother Dick and my little sister Faith, travelled all the way from Barnet town to Cornwall for our wedding, nor of the meeting of my mother and of my dear maid. Enough that I have told truly the tale of our journey to Spain and of the way I won my dear wife, a tale which, whatever those who read it may think of it, still stirs my blood and sets my nerves a-tingling.

Many said when I led her to the old parish church at Falmouth that a marriage between an Englishman and a maid who was half Spanish could never be a happy one, even although she had given up her false Papist faith, and had embraced the true religion of Christ; but they do not know that true love is a flame of fire, burning up the dross until nothing that is impure can remain. But I knew it then even as I know it now, for the which I thank God with all my heart.

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